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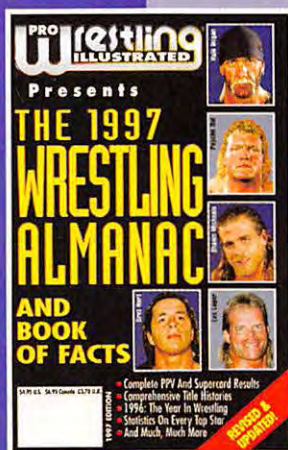
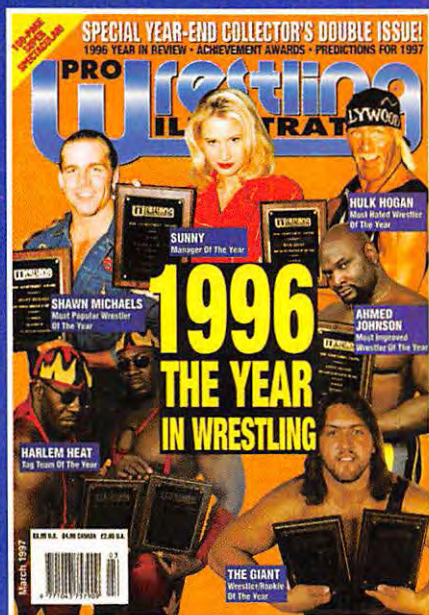
What Drove Kevin Sullivan Crazy

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May 1997

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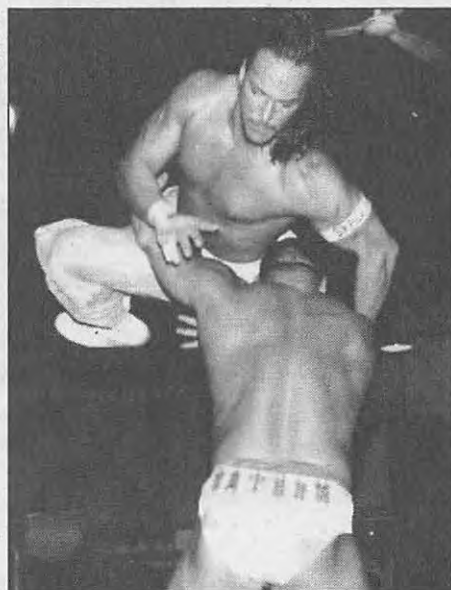
- 4 SINCERELY YOURS
- 6 REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK *by Stu Saks*
- 8 NAMES MAKIN' NEWS *by Bill Apter*
- 10 ON THE ROAD *with Dave Lenker*
- 12 BEHIND THE DRESSING ROOM DOOR *by David Rosenbaum*
- 14 THE INSIDER *by Brandi Mankiewicz*
- 16 ON ASSIGNMENT *by Liz Hunter*
- 18 CAPSULE PROFILE #253: TOMMY DREAMER
- 20 WHERE ARE THEY NOW?
- 22 NEWS FROM THE WRESTLING CAPITALS
- 24 MATT BROCK'S PLAIN SPEAKING
- 50 ONE ON ONE: BIG VAN VADER vs. JIM CORNETTE
- 60 INSIDE WRESTLING CLASSIC (May 1987)
- 64 OFFICIAL WRESTLING RATINGS
- 65 INSIDE WRESTLING ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS
- 66 BLAST FROM THE PAST



PAGE 26

FEATURES

- 26 THE MANY MEN OF WOMAN:
HOW CHRIS BENOIT DROVE KEVIN SULLIVAN
OVER THE EDGE
Don't even try to talk to the "Taskmaster" about this
- 30 THE SHAWN-BRET POPULARITY POLL SCANDAL!
Who stuffed the ballot box? We have our suspects
- 34 "HEY, LITTLE MAN, WHAT YA GONNA DO?"
Care to guess who The Giant was talking to?
- 38 IT'S TIME FOR AN UNDERTAKER MAKEOVER!
MIAMI BEACH, HERE HE COMES!
He needs a tan, new clothes ... and a lot more!
- 42 SCOTT HALL:
"WE CAN'T LET WCW DIE!"
Some surprising quotes came out of this "Hotseat"
- 46 SA-BOOOOOOOOOOOO!
DESTROYING HIMSELF FOR YOUR APPROVAL
Are we pushing him past human boundaries?



PAGE 46

Next issue on sale
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Sincerely Yours

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GLAD HE'S BACK!

I really enjoyed the story about Barry Windham's comeback in the WWF ("Barry 'The Stalker' Windham: The Hunt For Glory ... Part II," January 1997). Heck, I am glad to see Barry back period! It kind of bothers me, though, that with Barry's talent and experience, he is still not ranked up there with Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels. But I suppose that's because he's been out of the sport for a while.

Wouldn't it be great if Dustin Rhodes shed his Goldust farce and joined Barry to re-form their team? They would easily dominate the WWF like they did in WCW a few years ago. It could happen.

BRUCE D. GRAY
Orlando, FL

FLASH IN THE PAN?

Why must the WWF ruin a good thing by renaming 2 Cold Scorpio Flash Funk? After very successful tours in WCW and ECW, Scorpio has become an established wrestling commodity. Granted, Vince McMahon's federation does resemble wrestling's answer to

the witness-protection program, but Scorpio should have resisted the WWF's demands and kept his own established name. 2 Cold Scorpio should have taken notice of the WWF's past debacles, namely The Red Rooster (Terry Taylor) and Goldust (Dustin Rhodes). Scorpio's name change may ultimately make him just another flash in the pan!

STAN R. LENKIEWICZ
Paramus, NJ



The New Razor Ramon and New Diesel have yet to endear themselves to the majority of WWF fans. Reader Paul Raymond Jr. is just glad to have any Diesel and Razor back.

CHANGE IS GOOD

I totally disagree with Tommy Goodrich's letter concerning The New Diesel and Razor Ramon ("Imitations Not Welcomed," March 1997). I think having a new Diesel and Razor Ramon was a great idea. There are fans like me who felt the void when Kevin Nash and Scott Hall jumped ship, but Jim Ross helped fill the void by finding two fine athletes to continue the legacy of Diesel and Razor. This seems to be a problem for



Barry Windham levels Goldust with a flying clothesline. Reader Bruce D. Gray is glad Windham's back in the WWF and would like to see him team with 'Dust (a.k.a. Dustin Rhodes) again.

only the American audience, because this occurs commonly in Japan.

In Japan, there have been several different incarnations of the legendary Tiger Mask. Those men are just continuing the legacy of Tiger Mask, and the fans had no problem with the new incarnations. All I like to say is cheers to Jim Ross for the brilliant idea of bringing in The New Diesel and Razor Ramon. Hopefully, this trend will continue in professional wrestling.

PAUL RAYMOND JR.
Shreveport, LA



Steve Austin lost a key match to Bret Hart at Survivor Series, but he has been near the top of the WWF ratings ever since. Reader Jayson Sikes thinks the WWF has done its best to deny him title shots.

NO FRILLS AUSTIN

Steve Austin is the hottest wrestler in wrestling, but I think he is being ignored by WWF match-makers. How can a man who won King of the Ring and a man who took Bret Hart to the limit not be given more title shots than he has

gotten? I think the WWF knows he could easily defeat Shawn Michaels for the belt. The WWF would have a hard time making money off a man who stated in March's "Hotseat" that, "I won't sell dolls, T-shirts, and teddy bears. I just get in that ring and kick in the faces of all the pretty boys in the WWF."

Steve Austin personifies determination and integrity. Austin has not fallen into the trap of changing his name. He is a no-frills type of guy who doesn't care how the fans perceive him, and that is why he will succeed.

Sooner or later, the WWF will have to grant Steve Austin more title shots, and when it does happen, whether it is Bret Hart or Shawn Michaels he is facing, he will win the title and shove it into the WWF's face.

JAYSON SIKES
San Jose, CA

WISHFUL THINKING

Why do Hulk Hogan and his band of malcontents keep acting like Hogan defeated "Rowdy" Roddy Piper at Starrcade even though we all know he lost? Don't tell me, they forgot to watch the pay-per-view replay or call the *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* Hotline for the results of the card.

In my opinion, they are just trying to convince everyone—including themselves—

that the whole thing never happened. I liken it to my three-year-old son hiding the pieces of a broken glass under the corner of the carpet and hoping that I won't notice the lump. Well, as a father, it's easy to notice the shards of

(Continued on page 52)

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REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By Stu Saks

If you have seen the second edition of the **PWI Wrestling Almanac**, you might have noticed a significant change in London Publishing's view of the chronology of both the WWF and NWA world titles. For years, our magazines failed to recognize two title changes in those two federations. The title changes in question took place overseas and were ignored in the States by the respective federations. Now, in the interest of historical accuracy, we have revised our records.

On November 30, 1979, Antonio Inoki defeated Bob Backlund for the WWF World title in Tokushima, Japan. Backlund regained the belt on December 30 in Tokyo.

On March 21, 1984, Harley Race beat Ric Flair for the NWA World title in Wellington, New Zealand. Flair regained it in a rematch on March 23 in Kallang, Singapore.

For their own reasons, the promotions insisted in both cases that the title changes were not official, so in order to avoid confusion—and because the title reigns were largely insignificant because of their short duration—we chose not to recognize them. In hindsight, we realize that was a mistake. Certainly, if a promotion is going to claim have a world title, it has to acknowledge title changes that occur anywhere in the world. Admittedly, we yielded to the wishes of the two federations; we should have been above that.

Effectively, then, Bob Backlund is now a three-time WWF World champion. His previously referred to 5½-year title reign is now a four-year title reign (December 1979-December 1983). Antonio Inoki joins Shohei Baba and Mr. Saito as the only Japanese world champs recognized by London Publishing.

Harley Race and Ric Flair both have one title reign added to their records. Race will be referred to as an eight-time NWA World champion. Flair, for our records, will be regarded as a 10-time NWA/WCW World champion. Combined with his two WWF World title reigns, he is a 12-time world champion. As in the past, we will continue to recognize the linearity of the NWA World title through the current reign of the WCW World champion. We will not recognize as world champion any NWA title claimant whose reign coincided with that of a WCW champion.

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NAMES MA

HULK HOGAN is convinced that the partnership between **Lex Luger** and **The Giant** cannot work, and, in fact, might be a benefit to the New World Order.

"I'd love to see their strategy sessions, brother!" he laughed. "I've beaten those two guys easily so many times, and I tell you, neither one of 'em has much going on upstairs. And how are they going to beat anyone in the NWO when they don't even trust each other?"

Good question. Both The Giant and Luger attempted to explain.

"I do not call Lex Luger a friend," The Giant insisted. "But we do have a bond that comes from having a common goal, and that is to put an end to the NWO. That is where the unity ends. Luger and I still have a lot of unfinished business between each other that will have to be taken care of down the line, but I think we're united enough to do what we have to do."

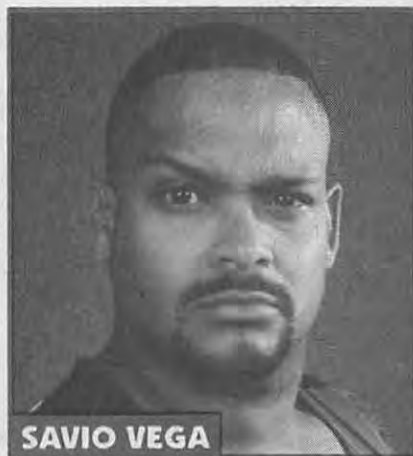


HULK HOGAN

"The Giant's motives are clear," Luger added. "He wants to punish and destroy the NWO, especially Hogan. I welcome his help, and yes, Giant, we're putting our personal anger aside for right now. Unfinished business? He's right. There's lots of

it, and there will be time to settle that in the future."

Hogan sees the union of Luger and The Giant as a last-ditch effort to save WCW, and one that could have discouraging effects on the enemy forces. "When these guys can't get the job done, and they won't," Hogan said, "that'll send a message to everyone else, 'What's the use of trying?'"



SAVIO VEGA

Savio Vega's decision to join the **Nation of Domination** came as no surprise to me. I could see something like this coming last year, after his sensational series of matches against then-Intercontinental champion **Goldust**. Savio was certain he would be recognized for his near-wins over Goldust with a shot at the WWF title. He never was. Every time I spoke with him, I sensed he was becoming more and more bitter.

"I look back at how Goldust cheated by hitting me with the belt to win," Vega said, "and I look back at other great matches I had, but lost because of interference. The guys who do not follow the rules are more successful. Look at Goldust now. He has fans, but that's all he has. He is a loser!"

Paul Bearer is officially the new

manager of **Big Van Vader**. As you can tell by reading the "One On One" between him and his former manager **Jim Cornette** (page 50), Cornette isn't happy about it.

"He keeps blaming me for not getting him the title matches he deserved," Cornette told me, "but I'm not taking it personally. If Bearer can straighten him out, more power to him, but I don't know if that's possible at this point. Now that I think about it, I remember a lot of times when Vader didn't listen to my advice. That's where his problems started."

PG-13, **Wolfie D** and **J.C. Ice**, are the USWA tag team champions again by virtue of a victory over **Flash Flanagan** and **Steven Dunn**. Wolfie grabbed his mother's walking



DEAN MALENKO

cane from her at ringside and flattened Flanagan with it before getting the pin. After the match, Flanagan was tossed outside the ring, where he landed on a chair. Wolfie then did a flip off the ropes onto Flash, who is now sidelined with rib injuries. **Bill Dundee**, J.C. Ice's father, has vowed to help Dunn exact revenge ... Sad to report that wrestling lost one of its great stars of the past on January 24. Former WWF tag team

KIN' NEWS

By Bill Apter

champ **Dr. Jerry Graham** died of complications from a stroke he suffered in December 1996. Jerry and **Eddie Graham** are remembered to this day as one of the best tag teams of all-time. Eddie died in 1985.

Jimmy Hart tells us that he offered WCW cruiserweight champ **Dean Malenko** a contract shortly after Malenko beat **Ultimo Dragon** for the belt, but he was turned down. "I helped guide him a few times last year, and we got along real well," Hart said. "He was polite about his decision. He told me he's a loner, and that's the way he wants to stay. I'm sorry he feels that way. I could do wonders for his career."

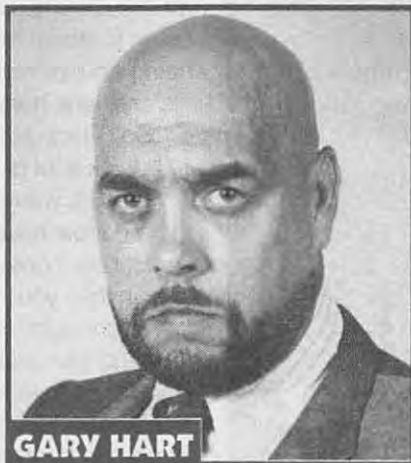
The Ghetto Ghoul is the new Windy City Wrestling lightweight champion—well, sort of. Ghoul beat **Brandon Bishop** for the belt, but he removed his mask afterward and revealed himself to be manager **Chitown T** ... **Tracey Smothers**, a new member of the USWA branch of the Nation of Domination, has changed his name to **Shaquille Ali**. He's chasing **Jerry Lawler's** USWA heavyweight title.



Miss Texas was that woman who came to the ring with **Kevin Sullivan** and got into a verbal confrontation

with **Woman** at the January 27 **Nitro**. She told **Gene Okerlund** she and Sullivan had a close relationship before Kevin met Woman. "I don't like what's happening to Kevin, seeing Woman runnin' around with **Chris Benoit** after Kevin was with her for so many years," Texas told me. "I'll help him get over this. Kevin, honey, you need to let them fade out of your life."

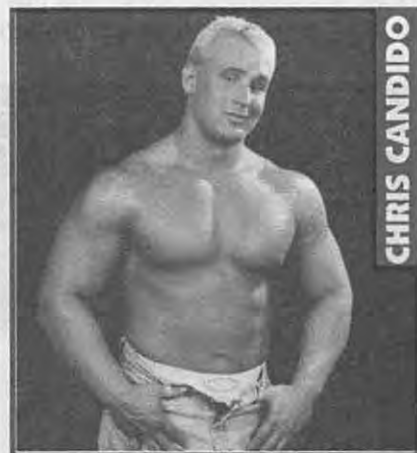
The Undertaker was fined his entire Royal Rumble purse due to the fact that he attacked referee **Jack Doan** after his match with **Vader**. "I won't stand for anyone manhandling our officials," WWF President **Gorilla Monsoon** insisted ... New Japan promoters are close to signing a match between former WWF World champion **Antonio Inoki** and former NWA World champion **Dory Funk Jr.** The two of them battled in a classic 60-minute draw for Dory's title in Osaka in 1969.



Gary Hart has resurfaced after a lengthy absence from the sport. He, along with former World Class Championship Wrestling broadcaster **Bill Mercer** and **Mickey Grant**, one of the founders of World Class, have formed a new organization called **World Class II—The Next**

Generation. Gary's son, rookie **Chad Hart**, along with **Scott Putski**, **Rod Price**, **Chris Adams**, and other Texas mainstays will compete on cards at the Dallas Sportatorium every Friday night.

Tommy Rich says he loves wrestling in ECW, where he just made his debut. "I've always been a brawler, and I never really loved to concern myself with a lot of rules," he explained. "There ain't no rules to follow here, and if you like to beat your opponent bloody, like I enjoy doing to guys like **Rick Morton** and **Terry Funk**, you can just go ahead and do it" ... **Chris Candido** tells us



that he believes ECW fans have finally accepted him. "When I first came in after being a **Bodydonna**, the fans really gave me a hard time," he said. "I didn't feel they accepted me. Now they've seen what I can do without **Zip** and without **Sunny**. They realize what a world-class talent I really am. Bless them all!"

Strange, but I don't hear any cheers for Candido when he, **Brian Lee**, and **Shane Douglas** sneak-attack fan favorites like **Tommy Dreamer** and **The Pit Bulls**.

That's all for now. I'll see you at the matches! □

THERE'S A VERY simple tenet of journalism, one that often goes ignored in these days of finding out "the real truth": If you want the answer to a question, go to the source. Most people won't lie to you, and even if they do lie, it's easy to tell. The signs of discomfort are almost always there.

The question in this case was about Rick Rude, who in January was at the center of ECW's most enticing mystery: Was he the masked man who came to the ring wearing a silver and black mask and confronted Shane Douglas?

"Hit the music!" the masked man shouted at one point. Saying that was one of Rude's trademarks. The masked man talked about his long feud with a blond NWA champion—Rude had a very long rivalry with Ric Flair—and then said he wanted to get even with Shane Douglas.

And that's where people started getting confused: Rude and Douglas never had a major feud.

The masked man left ECW Arena without speaking to the press, and calls to Rude's Florida home went unanswered. The following afternoon, Rude told *PRO WRESTLING ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY*, "Maybe it was a Rick Rude impersonator," explaining that the previous night he had been away on "personal business."

ON THE ROAD

With Dave Lenker

So was he or wasn't he?

"We have some excess frequent-flyer mileage," Publisher Stu Saks told me. "Why don't you go pay a visit to Mr. Rude?"

I put in a call to Rude, and two days later I showed up at his home, knocked on his door, and was invited in. He seemed a little perturbed by the invasion; Rude hadn't wrestled since suffering a back injury in 1994 and, from all reports, he has enjoyed his time away from the spotlight. That news came as a surprise because Rude has one of the biggest egos in the world. But I was,

after all, an expected guest, and when I walked in, I could see that Rude is a happy man.

First of all, he lives in a beautiful Florida home in which the wide-open living areas surround a spacious swimming pool. I walked in expecting to see a silver and black mask lying on the floor, but I didn't see it anywhere. I did see the two lovely women in string bikinis sitting by the pool, though.

It was a beautiful Florida winter afternoon, with high, blue skies, temperatures in the high-70s, and not a hint of rain in the forecast. Lunch was being served out on the patio—the table was piled high with fruits and vegetables, along with a large roast chicken—and as Rude returned to his spot in a lounge next to the pool, he asked one of his female friends to serve him. Both of them jumped right out of their chairs.

Having just arrived from Philadelphia, where the temperature was in the 20s and it seemed like the sun hadn't revealed itself in weeks, I wasn't exactly dressed for the climate. But if I had to sweat this one out, I was going to sweat this one out and, besides, I didn't plan on being an overnight guest. Rude would reveal himself in his answers, honest or otherwise.

"So," Rude started, "people think that was me."

"I think a lot of people are sure it was you," I said.

"Well, it wasn't me, but I'm flattered. I'm surprised more people haven't tried to imitate Rick Rude," he said.

"Honey," one of the women cooed, "nobody could ever imitate you."

"That's right," Rude said. "Nobody could ever imitate me. And look around you. What do you see? Why would I ever want to leave this? I have all I could ever ask for."

Maybe so, from a purely material standpoint. And Rude is a former WCW U.S. and WWF Intercontinental champion. But he never won the big belt in either federation, which couldn't have sat well with his ego. And going after Shane Douglas to start his comeback would make perfect sense; if he could come out of a nearly three-year retirement and beat Douglas for the ECW TV belt, he could probably contend for any belt in the U.S.

"No interest," Rude said. "I'd have to deal with you

(Continued on page 54)



The masked man who showed up at the ECW Arena sure sounded like Rick Rude, but Rude continues to insist he was away on personal business the night of January 11.

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Behind the Dressing Room Door

by David Rosenbaum

IT HAPPENS EVERY year: Somebody steals the show at the Royal Rumble, but they don't win the Royal Rumble. They do everything you're supposed to do in the Rumble—eliminate opponents, last a long time—but they don't win the Rumble. Wasn't it Bret Hart who first proved himself as a singles wrestler in the 1988 Royal Rumble, lasting longer than anyone else in incredible iron man performance? Well, he didn't win that Rumble; Big John Studd did.

But this year, the Rumble with an asterisk was won by Steve Austin in every way possible. He was the last man standing, he last-

ed the longest (with an asterisk), and he eliminated 10 men. Good show. The iron man won the Rumble.

Of course, he had to cheat to do it. Austin had been knocked to the floor with 50:04 gone, but the referees were busy breaking up a fight between Mankind and Terry Funk, so Austin's fall went unnoticed. Austin re-entered the ring, eliminated Big Van Vader and The Undertaker, then knocked Bret Hart over the top rope.

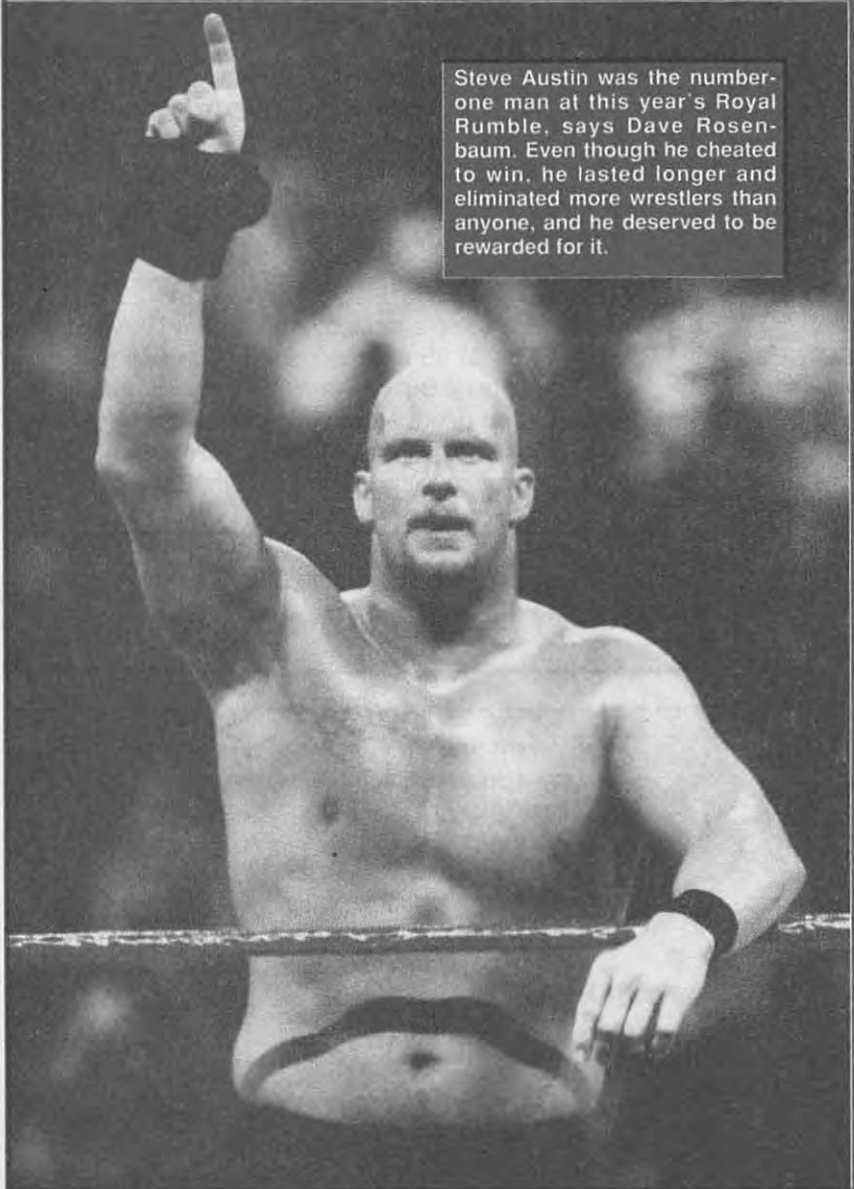
Upon further review, WWF President Gorilla Monsoon said Austin had not earned his shot at the WWF title and ordered a four-man elimination match with Austin, Vader, Undertaker, and Bret Hart as the only men in the ring. Austin, however, remained the winner of the Rumble, so Monsoon's decision detracted only slightly from Austin's outstanding performance.

He eliminated 10 men: Phineas Godwinn, Bart Gunn, Jake Roberts, Owen Hart, Marc Mero, Savio Vega, Jesse James, The Undertaker, Big Van Vader, and Bret Hart. There were times when Austin's dominance was so complete that he had eliminated everyone in the ring and was left waiting for a new opponent. Perhaps it wasn't the greatest Royal Rumble performance ever (Shawn Michaels turned in a few beauties himself), but it was certainly right up there among the best.

That should come as no surprise to anyone who has watched Austin compete over the past eight years. The native of Dallas, Texas, frequently tabbed as an underachiever, was often overlooked and ignored by WCW during his time there and didn't get all the chances or the exposure he deserved. Now, rather than being lost in the WWF shuffle, "Stone-Cold" is finally living up to his untapped potential. And the Royal Rumble was his greatest victory yet.

Interestingly, Austin came close to joining the numerous wrestlers to

(Continued on page 56)



Steve Austin was the number-one man at this year's Royal Rumble, says Dave Rosenbaum. Even though he cheated to win, he lasted longer and eliminated more wrestlers than anyone, and he deserved to be rewarded for it.

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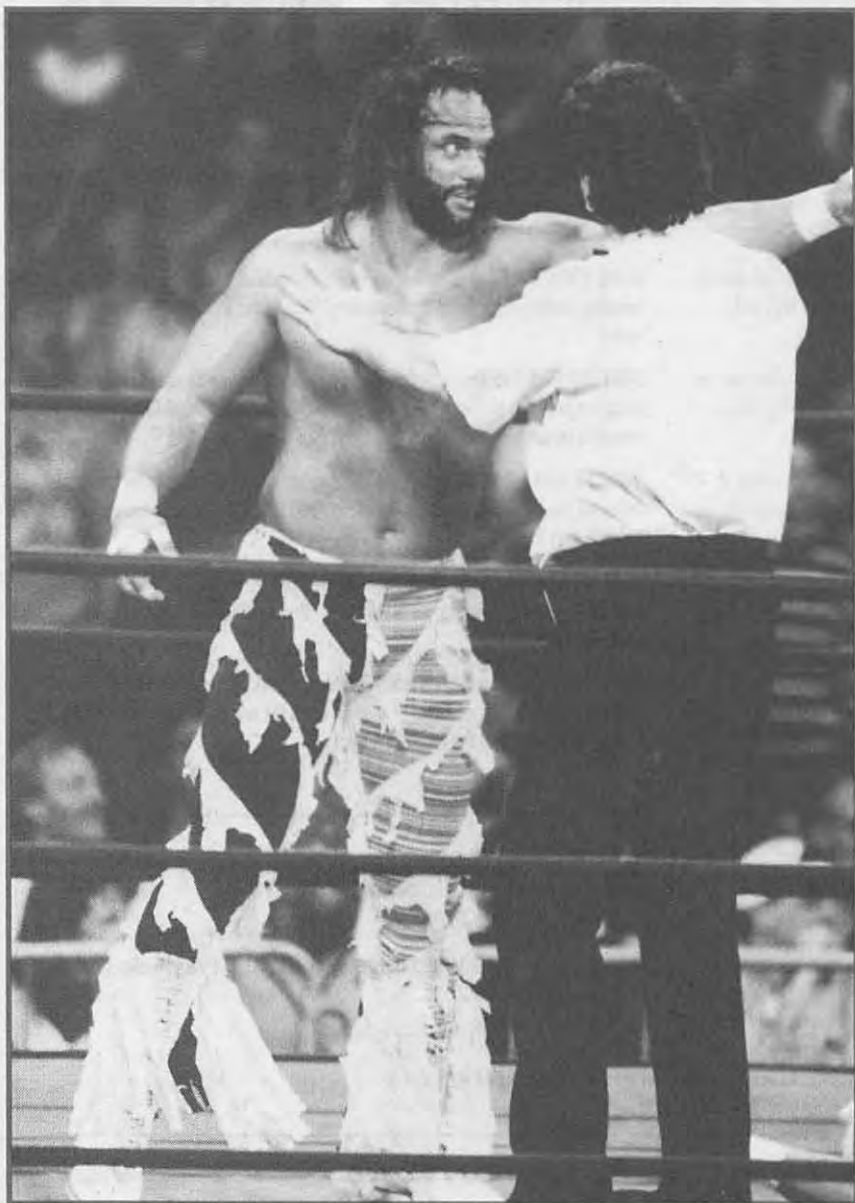
the Insider

by Brandi Mankiewicz

(The opinions expressed in "The Insider" are those of Brandi Mankiewicz alone and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of anyone else on the staff of this magazine.)

“WHAT’S UP WITH Sting?” Everywhere I go, I get the same question: Everyone I speak to demands an answer.

You know what? I’m not sure I



Randy Savage is the latest man to get caught in that murky gray area between WCW and the NWO. Why can't he just pick a side so we can get on with our lives?

care. I have written volumes on Whiney-Boy Mime Guy. He is on his way to setting the record for the longest consecutive pout in history. Right now, he is second only to Bob Backlund, whose tantrum has lasted, what, 13 years now?

For months, I have been witness to Sting swinging from the rafters and hiding in the catwalks. He has attacked wrestlers who were his friends and those who were his enemies. He has been accused of being pro-WCW and anti-NWO, as well as pro-NWO and anti-WCW. To date, I've never had an answer to those who inquire about Sting. I just shrug my shoulders and tell them to stay tuned.

But since Sting's declaration of free agency, a handful of wrestlers have also come out straddling the fence that divides the 100-year-old promotion and the six-month-old renegade group. Could this faction be forming its own neutral territory? Are these wrestlers establishing wrestling's answer to Switzerland? Could Sting have buddies that he could form an unholy alliance with and invite over for a *Crow* film festival? Let's look at the possibilities.

Roddy Piper exploded on the scene at Halloween Havoc, not for the good of WCW, but for his own selfish reasons. His fight with Hulk Hogan has nothing to do with federation loyalty. It's a battle of icons, egos, and who has appeared in better straight-to-video movies.

Randy Savage returned to WCW during the January 20 *Nitro*, but without a WCW contract. He told both groups to kiss his glittery posterior. Then from the rafters came Sting. After a brief confrontation, they came to a silent understanding (so nice to see these two finally able to keep their mouths shut for two seconds). With Sting's trusty bat in tow, they left through the throng at Chi-

(Continued on page 58)

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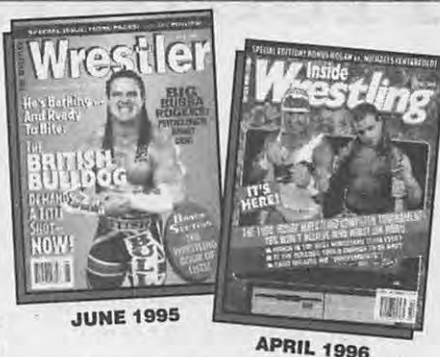
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ON Assignment

By Liz Hunter

WHEN I INTERVIEW a wrestler, I prefer to do it in the confines of a professional setting. Most are gracious enough to accommodate me. Then there's Terry Funk.

I called him many times to arrange a meeting during Royal

Rumble weekend, and he finally gave in. But it had to be on his terms, he said. I didn't know what I was getting myself into.

Funk selected a "nice restaurant" for us to meet in San Antonio. He was there to prepare for his triumphant WWF return at the Rumble. I

won't mention the name of the establishment for fear of a lawsuit. Suffice to say that this was not a four-star establishment. Funk did not have to wear a jacket to match the dirty T-shirt that he was wearing.

When we got to our table—if you could call it that—I found that it was actually a large wooden spool tipped over on its side with a lovely checkered tablecloth. At least, I *think* it was checkered.

"What do you think, Liz?" said Funk. "This beats those high-priced fancy-shmancy places you go to all the time. This is a *real* restaurant."

Always the gentleman, Funk ordered for both of us. Two All-You-Can-Eat Belly Busting Rib Com-

bos. *Oh my*, I thought, *there goes the control top.*

"Can we start the interview now, Terry?" I asked, reaching for my tape recorder.

"Doggone it," said Funk. "Where is our damn meal? I'm so tired of crappy service I could just spit."

And he did; a big wad of tobacco landed on the floor. We were only 10 minutes into dinner and already I was ready to call for the check. Funk was never known for his patience or his even-keeled approach toward anything. Taking matters into his own hands, he made a beeline for the kitchen.

Funk stormed through the doors and disappeared. The crashing of plates and glasses barely drowned out the din of Merle Haggard music playing from an eight-track tape jukebox. Minutes later, Funk emerged with plates of food in hand. "It's so hard to find good help these days," Funk said.

"Terry, let's talk about your return to ECW and tomorrow at the Royal Rumble," I said, trying to make my hellish experience worthwhile.

"Nonsense," replied Funk with a mouth full of meat and bones and a face lathered in barbecue sauce. "Eat up before it gets cold. Besides, there's plenty more where that came from, Liz. It's all-you-can-eat."

"But I think everyone wants to know why a man of your age and success would have anything left to prove," I said, trying to incite him into a response.

Funk immediately stopped eating. *Good*, I thought, *I hit a*

(Continued on page 59)



Terry Funk is still as ornery, tough, rugged, mean, determined, and nasty as he was 20 or even 30 years ago. As Liz Hunter discovered, he can be just as wild in a restaurant as he tends to be in the ring.

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INSIDE WRESTLING CAPSULE PROFILE ²⁵³

TOMMY DREAMER

HARDCORE HERO—that's what Tommy Dreamer is to fans of Extreme Championship Wrestling. Dreamer has not won a title in that federation since he and Johnny Gunn captured the tag team belts in 1993, but fans will probably love him just the same even if he never wins another title there. They admire his spirit, determination, and his willingness to get involved all sorts of violent specialty matches (*"I give the people what they want"*) ... Currently involved in a bitter feud with Shane Douglas, Chris Candido, and Brian Lee, ECW's "Triple Threat" ... Got his start in wrestling after he attended Johnny Rodz' training school, which he did while he was earning his degree in international business from Iona College ... Made his pro debut in 1989 and wrestled mainly in Eastern inde-

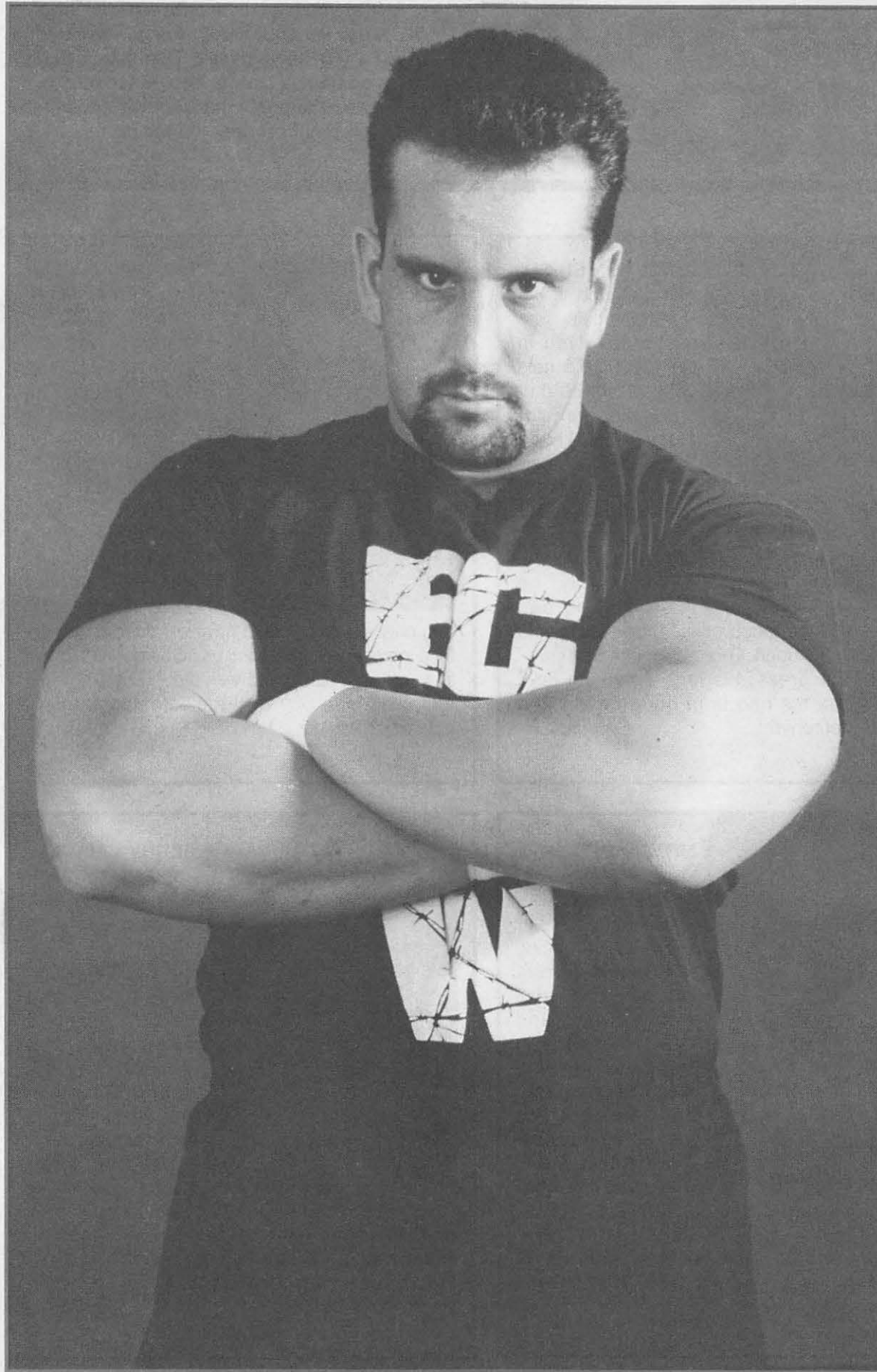
pendents early in his career ... Beat Tony Atlas for the Century Wrestling Alliance heavyweight title in 1992 (*"You never forget your first"*) ... Signed with ECW in 1993 ... Lost the tag team title when Douglas, who was subbing for Gunn, turned against him during a match and helped Kevin Sullivan and Taz beat him ... Got involved in an unusual feud with Jimmy Snuka, one of his idols, when Snuka accused Dreamer of calling him old ... One of the few wrestlers ever to kick out after getting hit with Snuka's "Superfly" dive (*"He's not my hero anymore"*) ... Rescued Mikey Whipwreck from an attack by The Sandman and Woman, and a feud was born ... Lost a loser-gets-caned match to Sandman and still has scars on his back from the postmatch beating he took ... Got his revenge by beating Sandman (and fracturing his eye socket in the process) in an "I Quit" match (*"Nobody makes me*

quit!") ... Teamed with Lori Fulington (then known as Peaches) to beat Tommy Cairo and Angel in a mixed match ... Joined forces with Cactus Jack to battle Cairo and Sandman, but Cactus later turned against him ... Came close to beating Douglas for the ECW belt in March 1995 ... Immediately began an ultraviolent feud with Raven, a childhood acquaintance, when Raven came to ECW ... Piledrived Beulah McGillicutty, Raven's valet, numerous times after she interfered in his matches (*"She's glad she's on my side now"*) ... Teamed with Luna Vachon to beat Raven and Stevie Richards in one odd bout (*"Nobody messed with Luna"*) ... Feud with Cactus heated up when Cactus accused him of being obsessed with pleasing ECW fans ... For a brief period of time, he had both Beulah and Kimona, another ex-valet of Raven, in his corner (*"Yeah, I had it tough"*) ... Raven later

brought Brian Lee to ECW to battle Dreamer in some violent cage and scaffold matches ... Dreamer has enlisted the help of Terry Funk several times, though (*"Funk will probably still be wrestling when he's 80"*) ... Has yet to cleanly defeat Raven, but he says he'll wrestle him anytime ... Has had some success teaming with Beulah against Douglas and Francine (*"Beulah tells me to treat Francine like I used to treat her"*) ... Don't bet against him winning either Raven's heavyweight title or Douglas' ECW TV belt very soon. □



Tommy Dreamer legdrops arch-rival Shane Douglas during a mixed tag team match also involving Beulah McGillicutty and Francine, their respective valets. Dreamer is arguably ECW's most popular wrestler.



TOMMY DREAMER

Where Are They NOW

Do you have a favorite wrestler who has left your area? Are you wondering where he is today? Then this special column is just for you. Each month we will update the whereabouts of four current or former wrestlers



FRITZ VON ERICH

The patriarch of the Von Erich clan is no longer involved in the sport. Fritz held dozens of titles during his career, including the Texas title and the American heavyweight championship, and also served as president of the NWA. Today he lives in suburban

Dallas and spends much of his time fishing and taking walks. Although Fritz no longer communicates with the press, his lone surviving son, Kevin, tells us his dad is in good health and enjoying his retirement.



TATANKA

The former WWF star took some time off to go into a private business enterprise, but he recently returned to the mat sport and is now wrestling in East Coast independents under his real name, Chris Chavis. "While I was off, I worked

out a lot with sparing partners and I feel I have elevated my game to a new level," he told us. Chavis has been involved in a bitter feud with Jim Neidhart of late and calls him "one of the most intense men I have ever faced."



MR. WRESTLING II

One of the most popular wrestlers the South has ever seen, Mr. Wrestling II is retired from wrestling and living with his wife and two of his sons in Honolulu. He still watches wrestling, but much of his time is spent dealing with business related to the con-

dominiums he owns. "I love Hawaii," II told us, "but I do really miss my fans in Georgia, Tennessee, and all over the South. Maybe I'll come back for a few weeks to help WCW against the NWO."



JERRY VALIANT

"Gentleman" Jerry was no gentleman when it came to beating up Tony Garea, Dean Ho, and others when he was paired with Johnny or Jimmy Valiant. Today Jerry lives in Indiana, where he owns a landscaping business. He made headlines last

Christmas when he played Santa Claus at a mall. "I can't describe it—you just see the magic in the kids' eyes," he told reporters. "I've seen the difference between the violent part of life and the softest part of life."



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NEWS FROM THE

**SAN DIEGO, CA
BY JASON BIAGI**



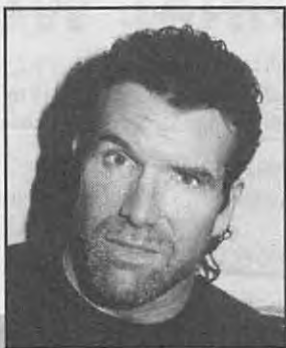
**BRET HART
VS.
BIG VAN VADER**



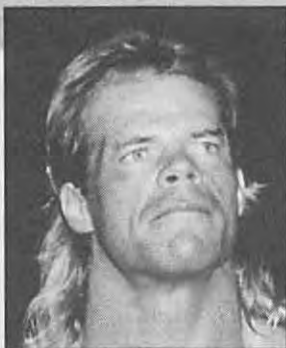
Bret Hart ultimately got a victory in this match against Vader, but only after Steve Austin interfered. Hart used his quickness to offset Vader's power. As the battle moved out of the ring, Vader targeted Hart's back, but Hart managed to avoid Vader's power bomb, and he slammed Vader instead. As Hart went for the "sharpshooter," though, Austin came to ringside. Hart went after him and was nailed with a "Stone-Cold stunner," but he was given the win by disqualification.

OTHER BOUTS: WWF World champ Sid Vicious beat The Undertaker ... WWF Intercontinental champ Hunter Hearst Helmsley defeated Marc Mero ... WWF World tag team champs Owen Hart & Davey Boy Smith defeated Mankind & The Executioner ... Faarooq beat Savio Vega ... Jesse James pinned Justin Bradshaw ... Flash Funk beat Leif Cassidy ... Doug Furnas & Phil Lafon beat The New Diesel & Razor Ramon ... Steve Austin pinned Shawn Michaels.

**MILWAUKEE, WI
BY JILL GOODE**



**SCOTT HALL
VS.
LEX LUGER**



The NWO suffered a key loss but gave Luger quite a beating during this Clash of the Champions match. Six and Kevin Nash interfered every chance they had, but Hall didn't need too much help to keep the advantage much of the way. Luger rallied with a dropkick and used several atomic kneedrops, but Hall gouged Lex's eyes and got the advantage back. As Luger began pounding Hall and lifted him into the "torture rack," Nash and Six stormed the ring. Luger was given the win by disqualification.

OTHER BOUTS: Dean Malenko defeated WCW cruiserweight champ Ultimo Dragon to win the title ... Scotty Riggs beat Mike Enos ... Chris Jericho, Super Calo, & Chavo Guerrero Jr. beat J.L., Konnan, & La Parka ... Harlem Heat beat Joe Gomez & The Renegade ... Masa Chono defeated Alex Wright ... Eddy Guerrero pinned Scott Norton after Dallas Page interfered ... Chris Benoit beat Kevin Sullivan in a falls-count-anywhere match ... Rick & Scott Steiner beat The Amazing French-Canadians.

**PHILADELPHIA, PA
BY KEVIN GREER**



**BRIAN LEE
VS.
TERRY FUNK**



Funk was welcomed back to ECW with a loud ovation from the fans at ECW Arena, but Brian Lee spoiled his return with an upset win. The two battled back and forth the whole match, with Funk bleeding from almost the beginning. They smashed each other with chairs many times before Shane Douglas and Chris Candido came to ringside and interfered on behalf of Lee. They set Funk up for a choke-slam by Lee, and Lee pinned him just seconds after executing the move.

OTHER BOUTS: Chris Candido defeated Louie Spicolli ... Mikey Whipwreck defeated Spike Dudley ... ECW tag team champions The Eliminators beat Axl Rotten & D-Von Dudley ... The Gangstas defeated Rick Morton & Tommy Rich ... Tommy Rich defeated Ricky Morton ... Mike Awesome defeated B. Mahoney ... Bubba Ray Dudley wrestled Pit Bull II to a no-contest ... Pit Bull I defeated ECW TV champ Shane Douglas by countout.

WRESTLING CAPITALS

NASHVILLE, TN
BY HOMER EARLESON



EDDY GUERRERO
VS.
DALLAS PAGE



Guerrero got help from the NWO to beat "Diamond" Dallas for the vacant U.S. belt at Starrcade, but it was help he never asked for. Neither man gained a clear-cut advantage until members of the NWO came to ringside. Hall executed an "Outsiders Edge" on Page, leaving him vulnerable to Guerrero's frog splash, which led to the pinfall. After the match, though, the NWO attacked Guerrero, too. He held them off for a while, but they did finally get the best of him.

OTHER BOUTS: Ultima Dragon beat Dean Malenko ... Akira Hokuto defeated Madusa in a tournament final to become the WCW Women's champion ... Jushin Liger pinned Rey Mysterio Jr. ... Jeff Jarrett beat Chris Benoit ... WCW World tag team champions Scott Hall & Kevin Nash beat Meng & The Barbarian ... Lex Luger defeated The Giant ... Roddy Piper defeated WCW World champion Hulk Hogan with a sleeperhold in a non-title match.

SCRANTON, PA
BY GARY WENTZ



STEVIE RICHARDS
VS.
LITTLE GUIDO



Richards brought the entire BWO to the ring with him for this match, but when the bell rang, he was all business. The two exchanged armlocks for the first few minutes. After Guido fought his way out of a hammerlock, he caught Stevie with a leg-drop. But Richards fought back and quickly went for his Stevie-kick. Guido, though, caught his leg. A few minutes later, after Guido whipped him into the corner, Stevie waited for him to charge after him, hit him with a Stevie-kick, and pinned him.

OTHER BOUTS: Mikey Whipwreck beat Chris Van de Lay ... Mike Awesome defeated David Jericho ... Axl Rotten & D-Von Dudley beat Bubba Ray & Spike Dudley ... New Jack defeated B. Mahoney ... Tommy Dreamer & Beulah McGillicutty defeated Shane Douglas & Francine ... Pit Bull II wrestled to a no-contest with Brian Lee ... ECW tag team champions The Eliminators beat Axl Rotten & D-Von Dudley ... ECW heavyweight champion Raven beat The Sandman.

MEMPHIS, TN
BY FRANK MILLER



BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
VS.
MO



USWA Southern champion Brian Christopher had to deal with more than just Mo in this bout. All the other members of the USWA branch of the Nation of Domination were present at ringside, and they taunted both the crowd and Christopher. But with the fans solidly behind him, Christopher leveled Mo with several kicks and punches. When Mo was dazed, Christopher came off the top rope with a flying legdrop. Queen Moesha then prevented the referee from counting the pin, however. When Shaquille Ali ran in and then choked Christopher with the referee's belt, the official called for the bell and disqualified Mo.

OTHER BOUTS: King Cobra beat Shaquille Ali by disqualification ... Akeem Muhammad defeated Tony Myers ... Bill Dundee defeated Kareem Olajuwon ... USWA tag team champions Steven Dunn & Flash Flanagan defeated Mike Samples & Vic the Bruiser when Dunn pinned Bruiser.



Matt Brock's **Plain** *Speaking*

Harder than nails, veteran wrestling reporter Matt Brock has logged more miles covering wrestling than any other journalist. Every month Matt will travel to the sport's hotbeds, reporting everything he sees without fear or favor

Shawn Michaels won the WWF World heavy-weight title again—it's his second go-round—but chances are he won't remember this one as fondly as the first, and wrestling historians won't view it quite as favorably. He beat "Psycho" Sid, but not before hitting him with a TV camera, which is a violation of anyone's rules ...

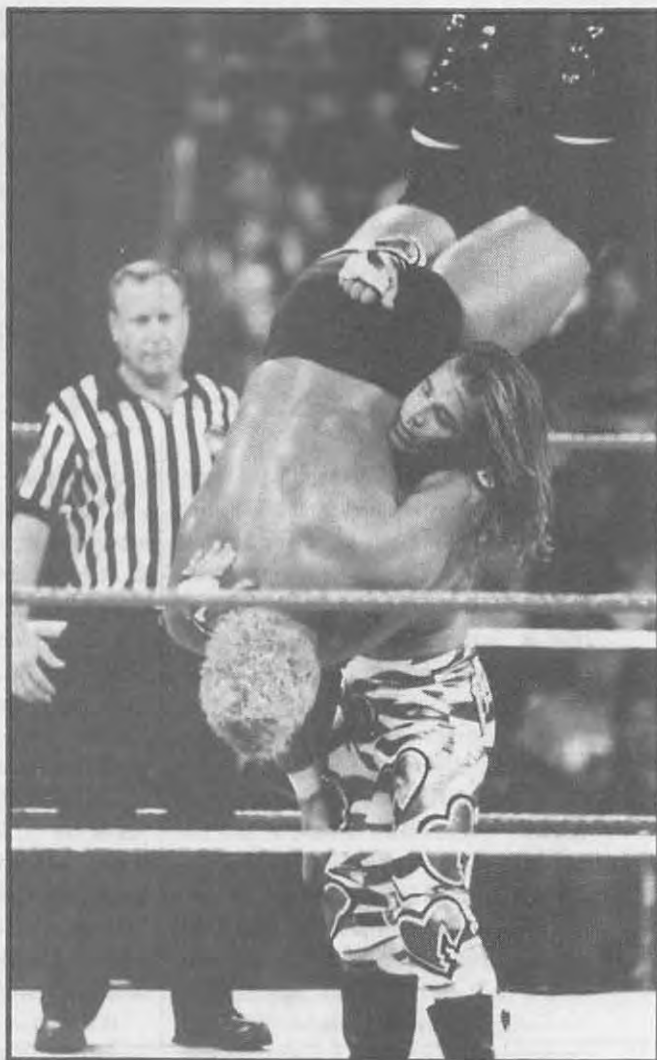
except maybe those in ECW. Referee Dave Hebner was unconscious, Jose Lothario climbed onto the ring apron, Sid went after Lothario, and Shawn got him with the camera. Within seconds, the belt was his once again. Interesting series of events, mostly regarding Lothario, who had no business being on the ring apron on the first place and in all likelihood was trying to get Sid's attention. As for Michaels, he's obviously reached the point in his career where he doesn't care *how* he wins. Fame will do that to a person. They taste it, like the way it tastes, and want more. Michaels did a couple of TV appearances, sat next to that Kathie Lee broad, and instantly got addicted to the mainstream spotlight. Not that anybody in the building really cared. There were about 60,000 here, and not many seemed upset by the outcome. Then again, this wasn't the last we've seen of Michaels vs. Sid. Now

if Monsoon can just keep Lothario and the TV cameras out of the ring, everybody would be better off.

This is what wrestling has come to: Bubba Rogers drives a Harley-Davidson motorcycle into Hugh Morris and people call it entertainment. Good thing Morris wasn't badly hurt—still can't figure out how that happened—but you have to wonder, first, what the motorcycle was doing in the building and, second, why Bubba was allowed to get on top of it. Then again, you have to wonder why Nick Patrick, a member of the New World Order, was

SAN ANTONIO, TX

CEDAR RAPIDS, IA



SHAWN vs. SID

the referee for every match at an NWO card, and why anybody who wasn't a member of the NWO would step foot within 500 miles of Cedar Rapids on the night of Souled Out. About the only thing worth watching was Hulk Hogan wrestling The Giant, if only because Hogan wrestling is such a rarity these days. Bottom line of this one is that the NWO is nothing without WCW, and WCW is nothing without NWO wrestlers, so they might as well find a way to get along, if that's possible. Civil wars never helped anyone, and it's pretty clear that Bischoff and Patrick are abusing their powers. Another bottom line: By this time next year, the NWO will be a distant memory. How pleasant it is remains to be seen.

Always said it takes a bad woman to bring a good man down, and there's never been a truer case of that than with Kevin Sullivan and Woman. Right about now, Chris Benoit should be watching his back, because Woman might be waving a knife right in his shadow, but the man is so consumed by love that he doesn't even know what's about to hit him. As for Sullivan, his long-running relationship—whatever that means—with Woman has pretty much blindfolded him to everything that's going on around him. Now he's hanging around Miss Texas, hinting they had a special relationship years ago. If ever there was a waste of mat time, it's two men feuding over a woman, especially this Woman, and the sooner Sullivan realizes that, the better off he is. As for Benoit, here's a kid who's been battling to reach the big-time his entire life, finally gets there, and now he's ready to throw it all away for a broad. Bad move, kid. Just take a look at Steve McMichael. He's got the blonde on his arm, but at least

Debra McMichael is his wife. Besides, McMichael doesn't have much in the way of wrestling talent, so there's nothing much to be wasted. Not so with Benoit, who has the ability to be at least WCW U.S. champion. Benoit should know that he wouldn't be the first man to get blindsided by Woman—get on line behind Sullivan and Rick Steiner—and he won't be the last. Regarding Sullivan, I'm surprised at him. Veteran, tough, has gone through some tough times in his career and gotten through them okay. You'd think he'd know better. Amazing what the male race will do when the female of the species starts showing off her gams.

Speaking of the female of this species, I've got my problems with one. Talking about Sheila Warner. Rings me up once in a while, but I always seem to be out of town. There's a thing about old flames. The more distant their memory becomes, the more you think about them in positive terms. Take Sheila. I seemed to have forgotten the way she always told me what was good for me, the way I needed a woman, but once in a while, her message will say something like, "Matt, it's Sheila, there's something I have to tell you," and there's something about the way she says, "have to tell you" that keeps ringing in my ears as a warning. Don't know what I miss more, women or that low-cholesterol diet I was on for a while. But the other day I'm walking down



WOMAN

42nd Street in New York—they've cleaned it up, turned it into a tourist attraction, for goodness sake—when a woman walks up to me and nudges me in the ribs. Never liked that. "Hey, Matt, it's me!" Can't place the face at first, but then I realize: It's the broad Fabulous Moolah tried to set me up with about 25 years ago. Horrifying looks, good talker. Looks even worse now than she did then, which is saying something. Start out our conversation with, "We have a mutual acquaintance. Sheila Warner." Shocked me so much that I immediately turned, started walking in the other direction across the street, and nearly got knocked flat on my backside by a yellow cab. It just goes to show you what I said about women. They'll kill you. □

THE MANY MEN



How Chris Benoit Drove Kevin Sullivan Over The Edge

Behind many great wrestlers over the years has stood one remarkable Woman.

Now she's standing behind Chris Benoit—and Kevin Sullivan is furious!

OF WOMAN

By Craig Peters

THERE'S A GLEAM in Woman's eye that can turn a man to jelly ... should she desire it to do so. It's a gleam that promises the earth, the moon, and the stars, and guarantees that the man caught in its gaze does her bidding ... for as long as she chooses him to do so.

It's a gleam that Kevin Sullivan knows well, because he has had a very close relationship with Woman for more than a decade. Woman has been Kevin's woman, and her success has been his success ...

... during the years she managed Sullivan himself.

... during the time she was associated with the tag team known as Doom.

... during the various times when she was working with "Nature Boy" Ric Flair.

... even while she was in ECW alongside The Sandman.

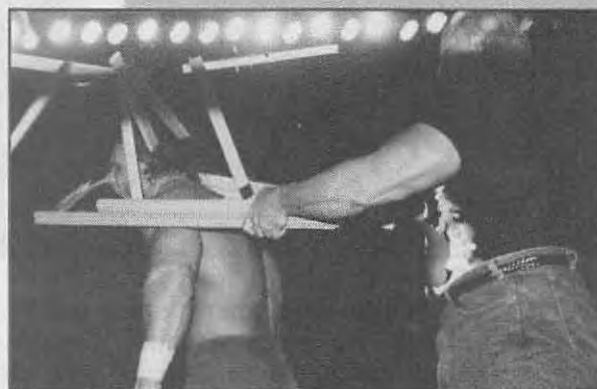
But Chris Benoit?

No, Benoit is a different situation entirely.

"You gotta see what happens to Kevin when somebody starts talking about Benoit around him," said Jimmy Hart. "It's wildness, man. You can just see him simmering and percolating, and the steam is rising and the pressure is building and—man, oh man, I just decide

to get out of the way when I see him get like that. That's all you can do."

"I was in the dressing room with several wrestlers, Sullivan one of them, when that video of Woman



The sight of Woman and Benoit with their arms around each other (top) infuriates Sullivan. He doesn't mind so much seeing her amongst all the Horsemen (top left). But seeing her interfere on Benoit's behalf (above) fills Sullivan with the urge to smash Benoit with a chair (left).

and Benoit was first shown," said WCW broadcaster Tony Schiavone, referring to a televised segment showing

Benoit and Woman sipping wine at a restaurant during WCW's last tour of Germany. "His eyes were like laser beams riveted to the screen. Of course, some of the comments the guys were making



Before she returned to WCW a little more than a year ago, Woman was at The Sandman's side in ECW (above). She frequently interfered in his matches, too (right), but Sullivan apparently wasn't bothered by that business relationship.



didn't help his attitude any, but you'd think he'd be used to that over the years. And usually he's fine. But Benoit? There's serious hatred there, that's for certain."

That hatred has been manifesting itself in a series of particularly brutal falls-count-anywhere bouts between Benoit and

Sullivan. For his part, Sullivan has been wrestling like a man possessed, displaying a fury and a passion for victory that, some say, hasn't been there in years.

"Hey, brother, if you ask me, it's just a matter of Woman doing a little dance to get Sullivan all jealous, and it looks to me like it's working!" said Steve McMichael

with a chuckle. The other members of The Four Horsemen, however, aren't taking the situation so lightly.

"Stylin' and profilin' is one thing, baby, it's the way of nature, and the way of the 'Nature Boy,'" said Ric Flair. "But I gotta tell ya something, baby, if a man ain't takin' care of business first, he's got no

reason to style or profile. Now I'm not saying that Benoit's falling out of favor with the Horsemen. No, no, no. He's a great wrestler, a man's man, and a valuable Horseman asset. All I'm saying is that he'd best be careful about where and when and how he's spending his time. These things have a way of sneaking up on you. Trust me, I've been there, I know exactly what I'm talking about."

Arn Anderson was slightly less diplomatic in his comments.

"This could tear us apart," he told *INSIDE WRESTLING*. "I'm real supportive of Benoit and Woman, but they're on the verge of taking this thing too far. They don't need to be riling Sullivan up any more, and I want it to stop!"

But Benoit feels that what he does on his own time is nobody's business but his own.

"No one tells me what to do," Benoit said when told of Anderson and Flair's remarks. "What do they wanna do, become my baby-sitters? Nursemaids? Whose business is it *what* I do on my own time? So what if Woman wants to be proud that she's hanging with me—do I have any control over that? That's her business."

"Look, Flair is the last guy on the face of the earth who should

open his mouth about anything, and sometimes I think Anderson and McMichael should just keep their thoughts to themselves. I'm doing what I want to do when I want to, where I want to, how I want to, and why is nobody's damn business."

But Benoit is a Horseman, and the demands of being a Horseman



You might not remember, but Woman did briefly manage Sullivan during his stay in ECW. She guided him and Taz to the tag team title there in 1993.

require that one be a Horseman 24 hours a day, seven days a week. And if Benoit is seen to be

breaking that requirement, then the other Horsemen—particularly Flair—will speak out about it.



Woman has been an adviser to Flair at several different points of his career. She was there when he put together this latest group of Horsemen (above), as well as when he was dominating WCW a few years ago (right). Sullivan didn't seem to mind that, either.



"This isn't about a little indiscretion, this is about something much bigger," McMichael retorted. "What makes Benoit think that maybe Woman isn't working with ulterior motives? Ha! Like *that* hasn't been known to happen! She could be an agent of the NWO for all we know! Maybe Sullivan and Hogan have made a deal! Maybe she's trying to soften Benoit up for a bigger kill!"

But Benoit maintains he's not about to listen to anyone. And Sullivan?

"Sullivan is just out of control over this thing!" Hart said. "He's wrestling like a wildman, but he's a wildman out of the ring, too. It's eating him up, this Benoit thing, more than anything Woman's done in years. This is too personal for him. They're throwing it in his face and laughing about it. No one does that to the 'Taskmaster.' You can't talk to him rationally about it, baby. It's got him all twisted up in knots, all bent out of shape. It's changing him—big-time!"

Or is it? Maybe it's changing him for the better ... or maybe it's all part of a larger plan. The truth of the matter? No one knows, for the truth can only be found in one place:

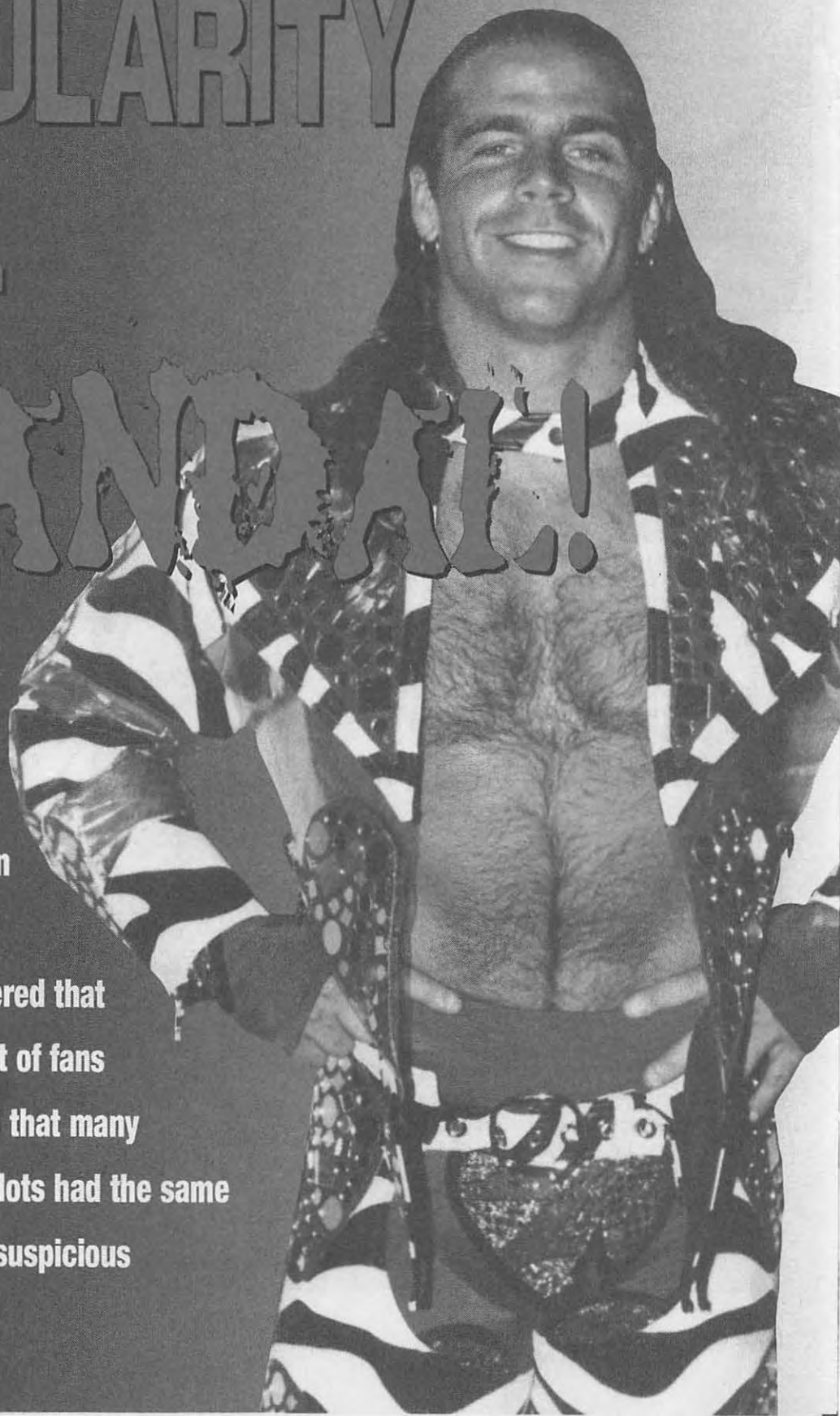
That gleam in Woman's eyes. ☐

THE SHAWN-BRET POPULARITY POLL

SCANDAL!

All we wanted to
know was which man
the fans liked better.

But when we discovered that
more than 80 percent of fans
voted for Shawn, and that many
of the pro-Shawn ballots had the same
handwriting, we got suspicious



By Steve Anderson

SOMEONE MUST have had a great deal of time on his hands.

The task was simple. We at INSIDE WRESTLING wanted to determine who was more popular among two of the most beloved superstars in the WWF, Shawn Michaels or Bret Hart. The best way to do it, we thought, would be to commission a poll.

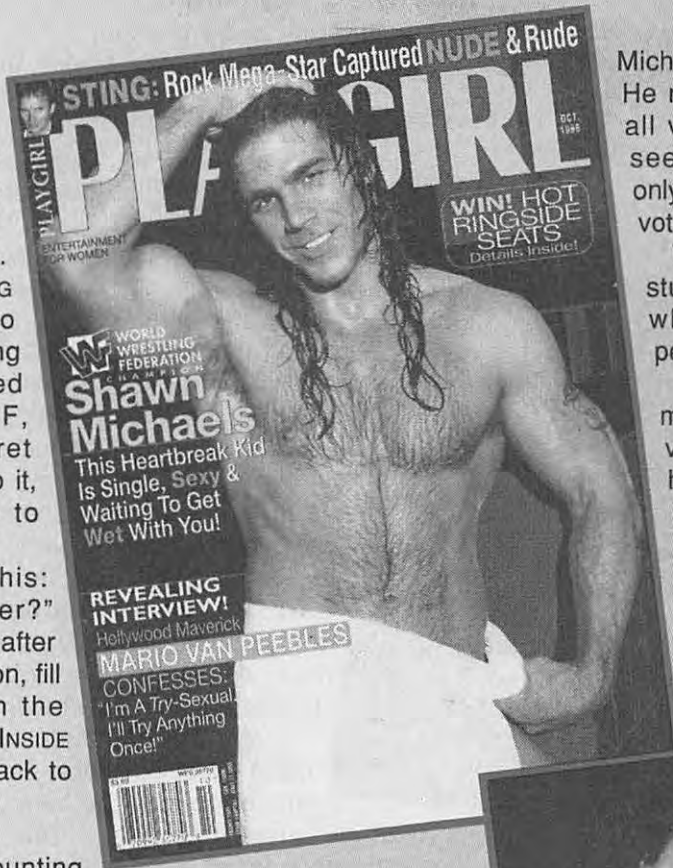
The question was this: "Who do you like better?" Readers were asked to, after thinking about this question, fill out the ballot found in the February 1997 issue of INSIDE WRESTLING and mail it back to us. Simple, right?

Wrong!

As we began counting the ballots, we noticed an unusual trend. A number of ballots were photocopied. Recognizing that a number of fans like to keep their magazines intact, we are usually quite willing to accept "reasonable facsimiles." But these were very unusual.

While the postmarks were, for the most part, different, more than 93 percent of them had three things in common. First, they all were in the same handwriting. Second, they were all votes for Shawn Michaels. A tremendous coincidence. Third, the section marked "additional comments" was left blank every time, as if whomever was filling out the ballots didn't have much time.

Obviously, if we give each ballot equal consideration, Shawn



The suspects: Shawn appeared on the cover of *Playgirl's* October 1996 issue (above), so that magazine might want to make him look good in our poll. Or maybe Bret (right) is using some sort of reverse psychology on his rival. Then, of course, there's Owen Hart (below).

Michaels is the clear winner. He received 80.3 percent of all votes. But doesn't that seem unusual? Bret Hart only got one out of every five votes? Bret Hart?

We think someone stuffed the ballot box! But who? We have our suspects ...

But who would be the most likely one? The individual or individuals would have to have a vested interest in Michaels winning. They also would want to see Hart lose, not just by a few votes, but in a landslide. Michaels himself? That's



the obvious choice, but most of the time in cases like this, the obvious choice is never correct. But it certainly could have been ...

OWEN HART

The younger Hart's motivation would be obvious. Owen has done his best to prolong his three-year feud with Bret. He has issues with Michaels, too, but his hard feelings toward Bret

There's a good chance Shawn would have won this popularity poll legitimately, as he won *PWI's* Most Popular Wrestler of the Year honors for 1996. But it's unlikely he'd get 80 percent of all votes.

age—and not his wrestling—that much more.

Hart knows that to defeat an opponent, the win must come both physically and psychologically. If it was Hart and those were his intentions, he may have succeeded.

THE CRAZED FAN

We said earlier that someone must have had too much time on his or her hands. Obsessed fans usually do. They devote their lives to the people they admire. Remember, fan is short for fanatic, so this is a real possibility. Hart and Michaels have both garnered loyal and intense followings throughout their careers. Fans want their heroes to look good both in and out of the ring. But how could a fan carry out such a scheme?

The Internet, perhaps? Wrestling fans with access to it now have more opportunities than ever to communicate with each other. An electronic

ment on the situation, but the magazine would have the resources and the wherewithal to carry out such a clever scheme. The printing could be handled with ease, and since the publication has correspondents all over the country, it could get different people to

mail in ballots from all over, thus accounting for all those different postmarks.

BRET HART

As strange as it may sound, a stuffed ballot box scheme might be right up "The Hitman's" strategic alley. Hart knows how important fan adoration is to Shawn Michaels right now. Bret could find a way to use landslide popularity poll victory against "The Heartbreak Kid." He already thinks Michaels has a big head, and a landslide victory in a poll like this would make him think about his im-

We can safely assume that it wasn't Mankind who sent in all those pro-Shawn Michaels ballots. But we also doubt that it was Michaels himself. That would be too obvious.

would likely override those. Owen has tried to wreak havoc in every aspect of his brother's life. And he remains jealous of his brother's success. Any victory by Bret is a defeat in Owen's eyes.

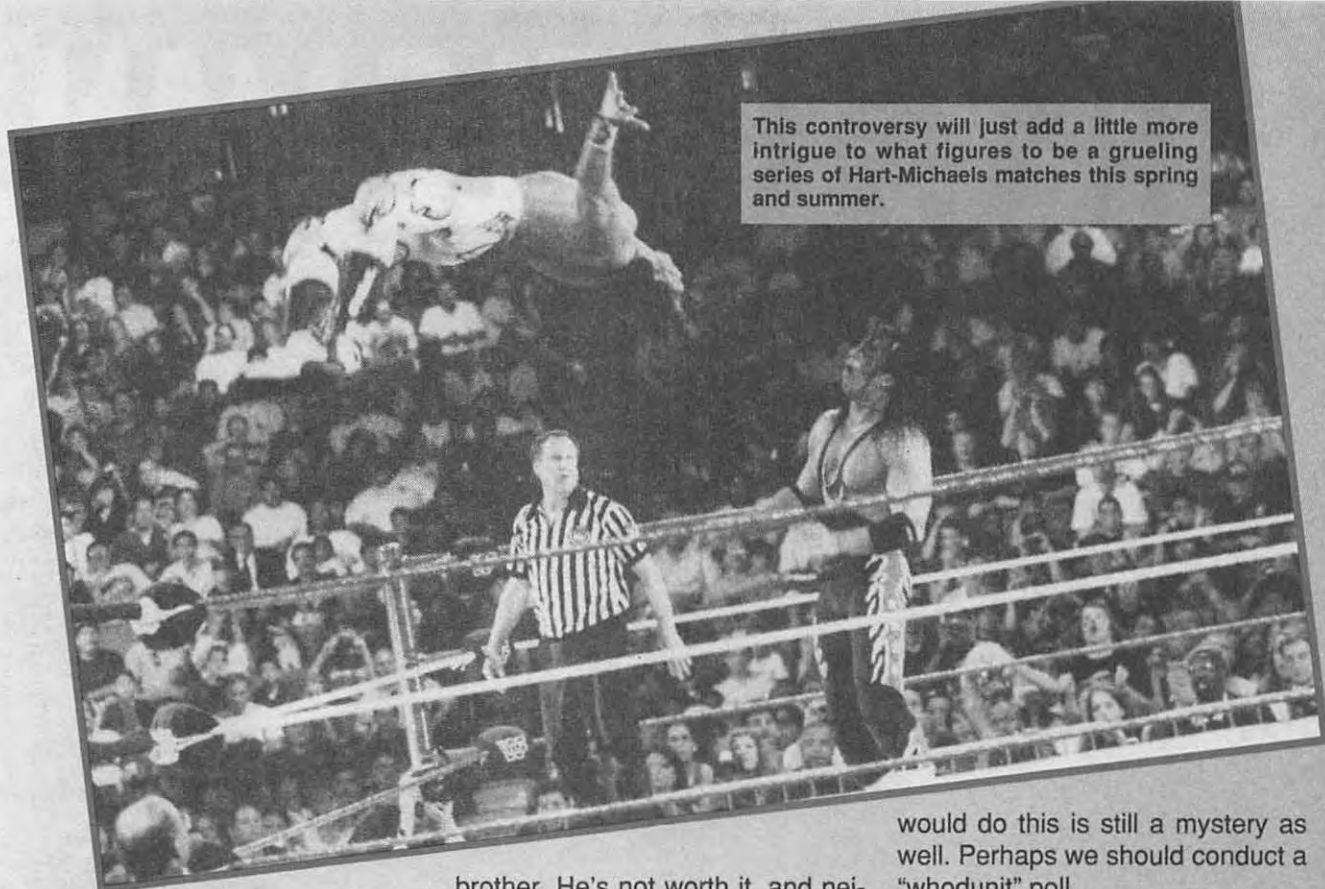
Like his brother, Owen has an exhausting road schedule. Because he is in a different city almost every night, he, too, would have every opportunity to make the ballots look legitimate. Bottom line: Owen wouldn't be above doing anything to make Bret look bad, no matter how much of an effort it required.

PLAYGIRL

Shawn Michaels solidified his mainstream popularity by appearing in the adult magazine sans ring attire. Many pictures featured Michaels clad only in a towel ... or with the WWF title belt strategically placed. The magazine sold well, but there are still plenty of back issue sales to consider along with a rumored second pictorial and calendar.

No one at *Playgirl* would com-





This controversy will just add a little more intrigue to what figures to be a grueling series of Hart-Michaels matches this spring and summer.

chain letter would put the process into motion. But also consider that large groups of wrestling fans get together in person all the time. The elaborate scheme could have been hatched at one of these gatherings.

Since *Playgirl* refused comment and it'd be almost impossible to determine whether a crazed fan is responsible for this scandal, we could only turn to the Harts for comment.

"I have a great relationship with my fans," said Bret. "I don't need a poll to tell me what they think of me. And I only wish I had enough spare time to try and pull off an elaborate and time-consuming scheme. Trust me, you got the wrong guy."

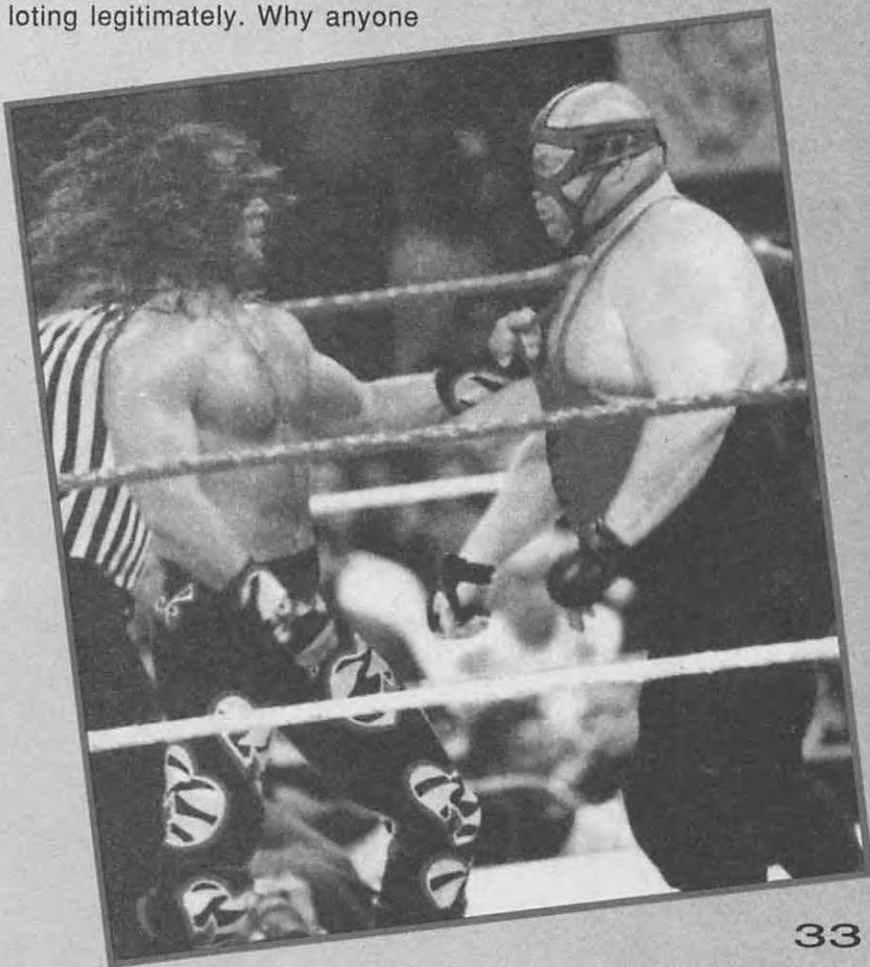
"This is all bunk," said Owen Hart. "I'm a WWF tag team champion and a Slammy Award winner. I'm above starting trouble with my

brother. He's not worth it, and neither is that idiot Michaels."

So the mystery continues. Michaels could have won the balloting legitimately. Why anyone

would do this is still a mystery as well. Perhaps we should conduct a "whodunit" poll.

No, we're not gluttons for punishment. ☐



The best thing for Shawn to do would be to put this poll thing behind him. He can't worry about popularity with behemoths like Vader still targeting him.

"HEY, LITTLE MAN,



At 6'8", Hulk Hogan is not accustomed to looking up at his opponents. But if history is any indicator, the self-proclaimed "giant killer" will get all he can handle from a certain 7'4" opponent. Actually, he already has!

WHAT YA GONNA DO?"

By Steve Anderson

"HOLLYWOOD" HULK Hogan claims that he has never feared any giant.

"The bigger they are, the dumber they are, brother," brags the reigning WCW World heavy-weight champion. "And there's nothing easier to chop down than a big, dumb, stinky Giant!"

Hogan has had his share of battles with wrestling behemoths. He has traded blows with some of the tallest and heaviest in the history of professional wrestling. His bravado in

challenging, wrestling, and defeating the big boys of wrestling has helped to make him the legend that he is today.

But The Giant is a different story altogether.

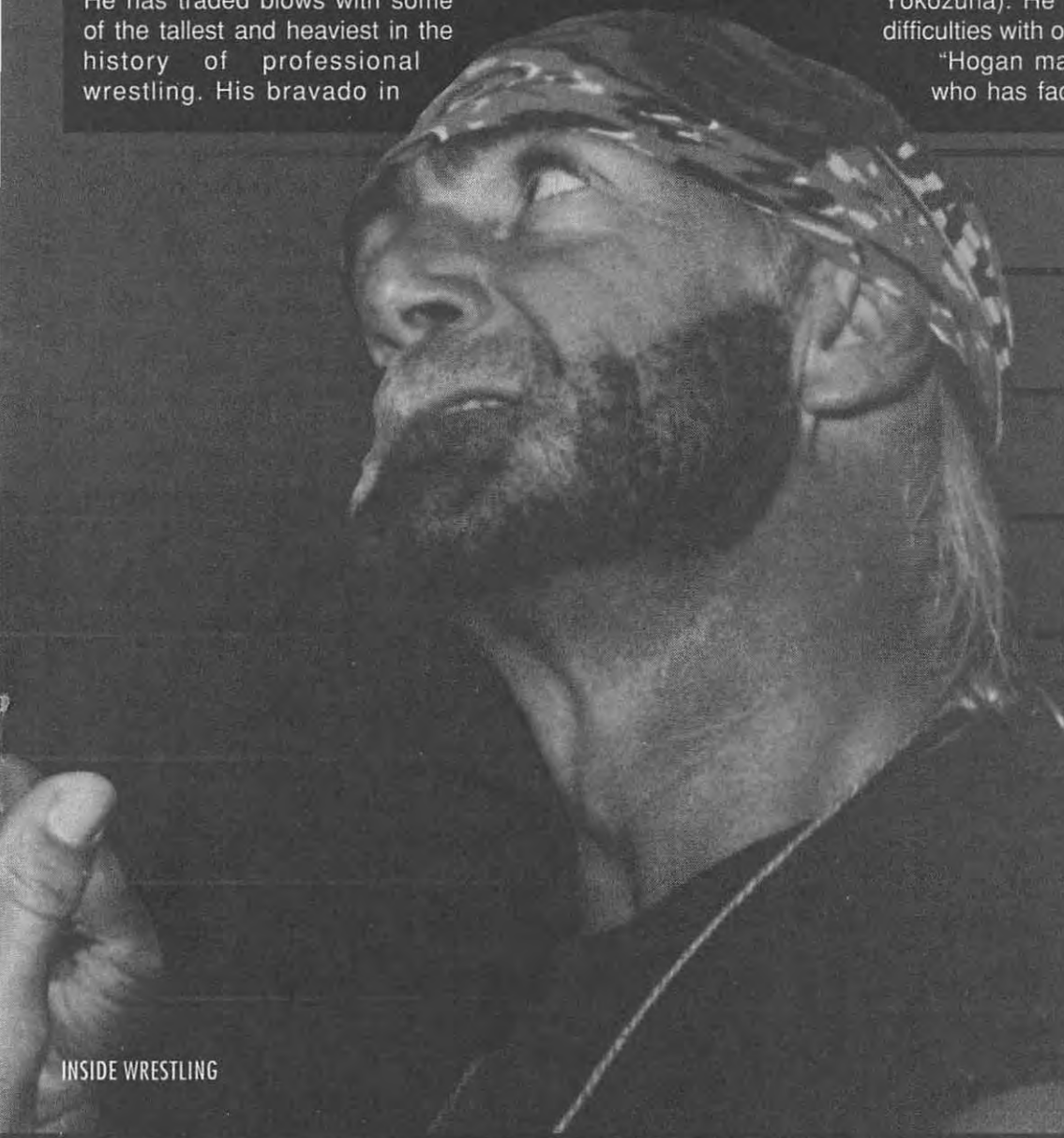
In July 1996, Hogan assumed a new role in wrestling. He is now the one doling out the cowardly sneak-attacks and verbal barrages against his enemies. But just like the yellow-and-red-clad superhero did so many times, Hogan is now battling yet

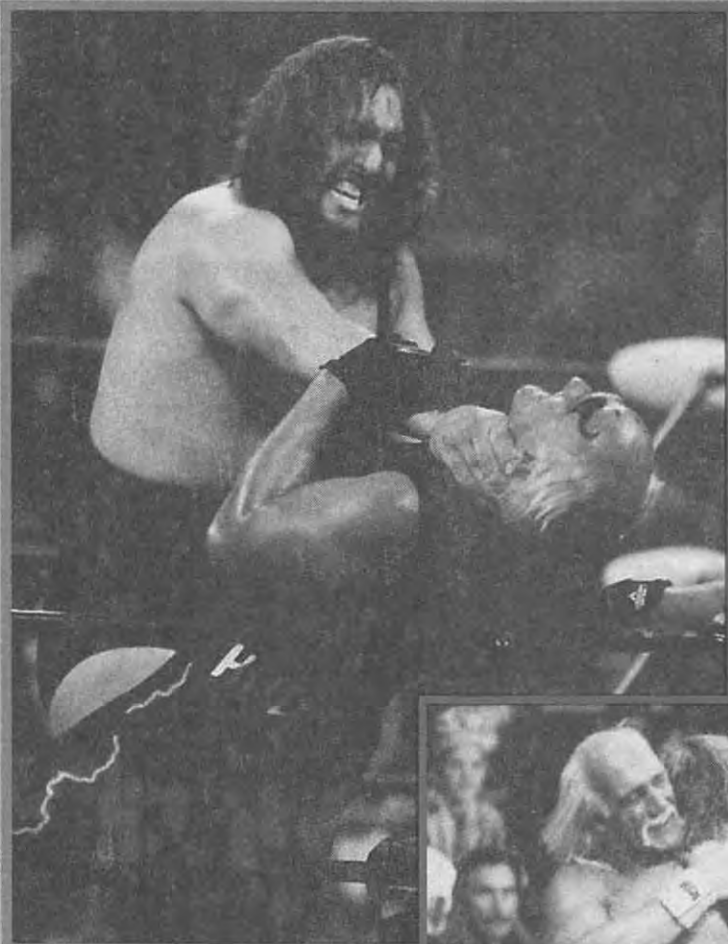
another opponent who has a huge advantage in size.

The Giant.

But The Giant has other advantages as well. He is younger and faster than his former NWO cohort. A better technical wrestler, too. He also is aware of Hogan's track record with bigger men. Three of Hogan's WWF World title losses came at the hands of men 6'4" or taller and in excess of 320 pounds (Andre the Giant, The Undertaker, and Yokozuna). He has had serious difficulties with others.

"Hogan may be a big man who has faced big men, but





Hogan insists he has had no problem manhandling The Giant during the last 18 months. These pictures suggest otherwise. His chokeholds (above) and bearhugs (right) have given "Hollywood" plenty of problems.



I'm bigger than all of them," said The Giant. "And I'm not in a slump or at the tail end of my career."

The old Hogan never backed down from a challenge, no matter what the size of his opponent. That worked against him all too often. Being in the unusual role of the lighter wrestler, Hogan would start out fast with fists flying. And what would ultimately turn the match in his favor for good was one particular move.

A very basic move.

A move that every wrestler uses.

A bodyslam.

Hogan knows (or at least used to know) the value of crowd reaction. Bodyslamming a man larger

than him would always incite a response that would give him the emotional fuel necessary to go on and win the match. But Hogan wanted it all too fast. He'd inevitably try to bodyslam his behemoth foes without the benefit of softening them up first. It happened with Andre the Giant, Yokozuna, and King Kong Bundy. Hogan wrenched his back trying to slam each one of those three.

A GIANT SCORECARD: HOW HOGAN HAS

Here's a look at how Hogan has done against some of the toughest big men in the sport over the years:

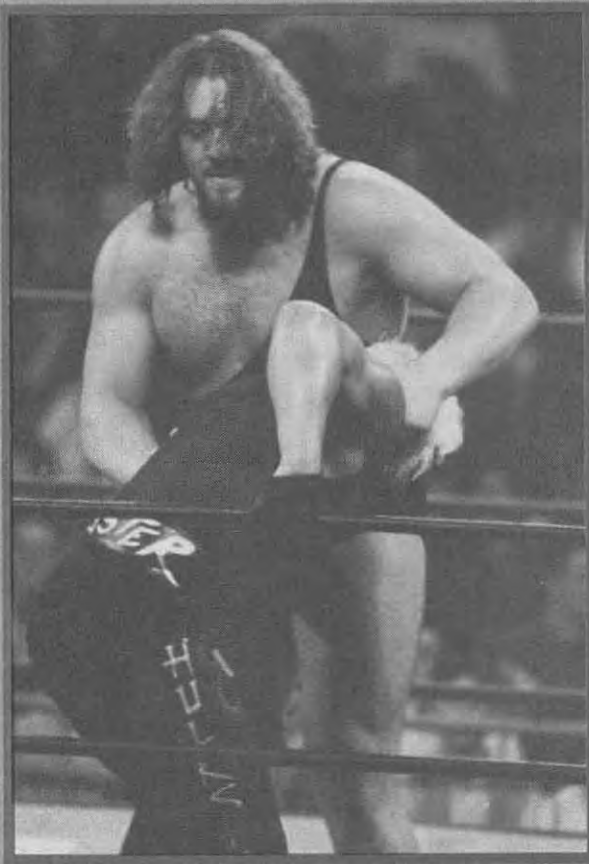
Andre the Giant (7'5", 497): The two had several show-downs, most notably at WrestleMania III and IV, and at the infamous *Saturday Night's Main Event* at which Hogan lost his coveted WWF World title. Each time, Hogan started quickly, hoping to wear the big man down.

But Hogan could never get over the betrayal of his former friend. He beat him, but he had a lot of difficulty handling the original Giant.

"Psycho" Sid (6'8", 318): As Sid Justice, the man from West Memphis, Arkansas, gave Hogan all he could handle in their WrestleMania VIII match. At the time, a surprising number of fans cheered on Sid, but due to outside interference, Hogan

never logged a clean victory over him. Right now a rematch seems unlikely.

Yokozuna (6'4", 589): They're tied, 1-1. The first match, at WrestleMania IX, was an impromptu bout, as Hogan answered Mr. Fuji's open challenge after Yoko beat Bret Hart for the WWF belt. Twenty-five seconds later, Hogan won his fifth WWF title. Hogan, however, faltered in the rematch, at King



When The Giant and Hogan first met, WCW was counting on the "Hulkster" to neutralize the big, nasty man (above left). Now WCW is counting on The Giant to help destroy Hogan and the NWO (above right).

"Hogan was even cocky back then," said The Giant. "He thought that he could do it all, and because he was Hulk Hogan, he would win. Those days are over now, and he knows it. He's tried that against me before, and it didn't work, but we'll meet again.

He never beat me without help from his goons because he can't beat me. He'll never beat me one-on-one.

"And let me tell you, if he tries to slam me, I'll make sure his spine snaps."

In the last six months, Hogan

has become the hunter instead of the hunted. During Hogan's entire tenure with the WWF, wrestlers came after him. Now he is egging on The Giant, daring him to confront him in the ring. He did the same thing to Roddy Piper after Piper arrived in WCW. He'll make some derogatory comments about him, The Giant will come out to the ring, and Hogan will let his cronies do the rest.

"That stinky Giant is just plain stupid," said Hogan. "How many times did I beat The Giant so far, anyway? Ten? Twenty? If he thinks that his size is my weakness, he's crazy, brother. Throughout my career, I have faced those beanstalks and the giants that live there. I have not failed yet."

But if he gazes toward at the top of this beanstalk, Hogan cannot like what he sees. □

HANDLED THE HEAVIES

of the Ring '93, as the former sumo star shocked the "Hulkster" with a dizzying array of power moves. Interference by a ringside photographer helped Yoko regain the title.

The Undertaker (6'9", 328): Both of their WWF title matches were marred by controversy and outside interference, thanks mostly to Ric Flair. Perhaps Hogan underestimated his ghoulish foe, too. The Under-

taker, with "Hulkamania" casket in tow, always seemed to have a mental edge over Hogan.

King Kong Bundy (6'4", 446): Bundy got Hogan's attention by sneak-attacking and injuring him prior to WrestleMania II. Hogan demanded a match at the WWF's premiere event. With the two locked in a cage, he handled Bundy with relative ease. Bundy appeared overmatched.

He's gone as far
as he could with
that ghoulish look.
The Undertaker needs
new life, any life.
Ever wonder how
he'd look with
a tan and some
real clothes?

IT'S TIME FOR AN

comes!

Miami Beach, Here He

By Bryan Ethier

visitor may arrive."

Delasantro had spent each of the last dozen mornings suffering through the same routine. It all began two weeks earlier when he wrote a letter to the WWF urging the federation to get help for The Undertaker.

"He needs a complete makeover," Gi Gi pleaded in his letter, a copy of which he sent to INSIDE WRESTLING. "I have just the facilities here in Miami to transform him from a lifeless zombie into a real human. It's

time for him to reverse his strategy. He has to stop trying to lull his opponents into a slumber and be more aggressive. He calls himself an undertaker, he looks like dead man, and he wrestles as if he has one foot in the grave and is trying to drag his opponent in with him.

"I think if he looked more like a human being, he'd feel more energy and he'd soar right to the top."

Of course, Gi Gi knew it was a longshot that the owner of a hair salon and tanning studio could convince a wrestling giant to get a trim, a shave, and don a Brooks Brothers suit.

Yet Gi Gi *knew* the solution to 'Taker's recent mini-slump could be found in a seven-foot tanning booth.

ON THE MORNING after yet another sleepless night, Gi Gi Delasantro poured himself a coffee latte, ran a brush through his hair, and plucked a few loose hairs from his rust-colored eyebrows.

"Must look good," he muttered. "You never know when that special



UNDERTAKER MAKEOVER!





One of The Undertaker's favorite things to do in the ring is lift his opponent by the throat and toss him to the mat. He needs a new look, yes, but he needs some new moves, too.

though successful in his business, he still misses the smell and sounds that wafted from the squared circle.

That's why he wrote to the WWF.

I know more about Undertaker than anyone in the federation, he thought. He doesn't even have a manager anymore! He doesn't have a plan!



'Taker doesn't usually spend much time working over his opponent's arm, and he also doesn't spend much time doing certain other things ... like soaking up sun and buying stylish clothes. It's time he did.

"A man is what he feels," he mused. "If you creep around cemeteries looking for bats and caressing an urn for luck, you ain't much of a man."

Gi Gi had seen enough of the Undertaker to know the half-dead man was heading for trouble. The WWF was popular with his customers, and whenever *Raw* was on, Gi Gi would turn on the TV to entertain his clients. Naturally, by the time a new client became a regular, he or she would be a wrestling virtuoso.

Gi Gi was also able to observe nuances in a wrestlers' styles and personalities because his dad, Eduardo, helped run a local wrestling show back in the days when Gorgeous George was popular. As a kid, Gi Gi often attended the shows in the smoky arena.

That was 30 years ago. Today,

The Undertaker is not wrestling up to the level of his own abilities, in Gi Gi's mind. Night after night he uses the same tactics—the darkened arena, the eerie organ music, the same moves. Undertaker's wan complexion—that was a bad sign, Gi Gi decided. Poor circulation, poor nutrition. Not enough sun. Then there was the rope-a-dope routine, where 'Taker appeared down and out. Suddenly he would delight the audience by rising from his stupor. Then came the "tombstone" piledriver.

Some day, however, a gifted

wrestler such as Steve Austin would send 'Taker to his grave ... forever.

In his letter, Gi Gi outlined the strategy he'd use to revive the career of The Undertaker.

First, the greasy, long locks had to go.

"I'll give him the George Clooney look," he said.

The teeth—they needed more than Ultra Brite. They needed Spic 'n' Span and a steel brush to scrape off what looks like 300 years of tartar.

Most important, Undertaker needed to look like a member of society, not a member of the six-foot-under club. That meant stuffing him in a tanning booth, and parching his skin cocoa-brown.

"The man needs to look alive. In a week, I can have him as tanned as George Hamilton."

Get rid of that spooky beard, too, Gi Gi decided. Give him the Harvard look by leaving sideburns mid-ear length. Would these changes in

There's no question that the "tombstone" piledriver is one of wrestling's most punishing finishers (below and opposite page, right). But if Undertaker changed his image, perhaps he'd feel the urge to add another finisher to his repertoire.



appearance make Undertaker a better wrestler? It would help, Gi Gi advised.

"But he needs more than a sunburn. He needs a manicure, pedicure, an earring, new tattoos, a whole new wardrobe."

After 30 years in the business, Gi Gi understands that a tan, haircut, and glistening teeth don't completely change one's life. That was part of the package. You needed to dress, walk, think, and talk for success.

Gi Gi suggested in his letter that Undertaker work with an exclusive Miami tailor named W. Willie Lowenstein. WW, as his customers call him, sees people by appointment only and deals strictly in cash. But if you want a finely tailored wool suit and cashmere coat to go with it, WW is your man.

"Perhaps if Undertaker dressed like he was going out on the town, he might wrestle with more purpose," said Gi Gi.



Undertaker changed his look and outfit slightly in the last few months, but slightly isn't enough. We want him full of life and energy ... and we want him to stop hanging around cemeteries.

If only Vince McMahon would read Gi Gi's letter. If only he would advise Undertaker to fly immediately to Florida to avail himself of Gi Gi's unique skills.

But it had been nearly two weeks since Gi Gi had mailed his letter. He was beginning to wonder if he'd ever get a response. He settled back into a chair and sipped his latte. He turned on Saturday morning wrestling. There was Under-

Of course, all these improvements would never get Undertaker a shot at the World title.

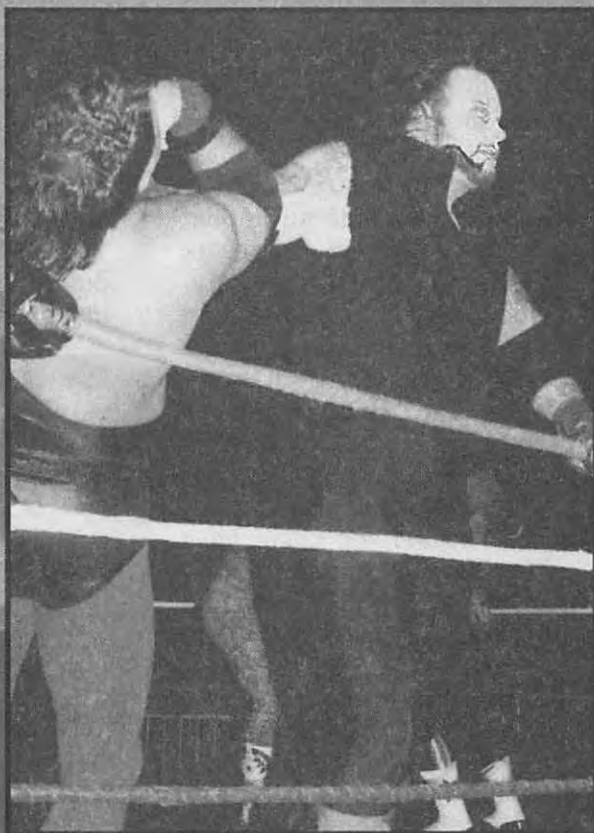
"Let's face it," Gi Gi's letter stated, "The Undertaker has the social graces of a gravedigger. He needs a public relations genius."

Gi Gi is just the PR ace 'Taker needs. He hadn't built this business up from a one-room, two-chair fledgling studio into one of Florida's most plush and respected salons without having some business savvy. Gi Gi would have Undertaker swinging from the rafters a la modern-day Tarzan.

That complexion, well, we've seen enough of that, too. Put 'Taker in a tanning salon if that's what it takes. Get this man some color in his skin.

taker, sprawled across the screen. Gi Gi covered his eyes.

He knew then that his letter had been tossed into the circular file. ■



HOT SEAT

SCOTT HALL

"WE CAN'T LET WCW DIE!"

SCOTT HALL HAD a choice. He could have remained in the WWF as Razor Ramon and made a very nice living. Or he could have done something completely different. He decided to do something different, and in the process, he made history.

The New World Order might very well fail in its quest for world domination, but that does nothing to diminish Hall's considerable accomplishments. In addition to being an outstanding brawler, Hall is a master of psychological warfare. With his wisecracks, cutting barbs, and biting sarcasm, he is able to get under the skin of the wisest and most experienced veterans in WCW. Hall's detractors deny his effectiveness, but the results are undeniable.

Hall is even more effective working in concert with

his NWO cohorts. With men like Hulk Hogan, Kevin Nash, and Ted DiBiase on his side, Hall has taken his game to a new level, using their strengths to help make himself one of the most dangerous men in the sport. The NWO would not be nearly as feared as it is without Hall as one of its cornerstones.

Of course, everything is not rosy for the NWO, or for Hall. He and his comrades face daily threats to their desires for dominance. Many WCW wrestlers are standing together, and Hall is one of their chief targets.

Senior Writer Andy Rodriguez caught up with him just days after the NWO's first pay-per-view, *Souled Out*. "He is one of the most arrogant men I've ever interviewed," Rodriguez said, "but he'll always tell you what's on his mind."

Q: I'll ask you first about *The Giant*. What does his leaving do to the NWO?

A: Absolutely nothing.

Q: You're saying a big man like that taking off doesn't hurt you guys?

A: No, maybe I should reconsider that. He made an impact by leaving. He made us stronger. It's like "Hollywood" says; we were using *The Giant*. He couldn't see that, but he ain't too smart. *The Giant* thought he was one of us, but he could never be a part of the NWO, not with the way he thinks.

Q: But wouldn't you rather have *The Giant* on your side?

A: Listen, if *The Giant* had his act together, he'd be perfect for the NWO. Take one look at the guy and you see he has all the tools. His problem is that his ego is too big. He acts like he's too good to follow orders. Sometimes you

have to do things you don't want to do. You can't always be running the show. Everybody in the NWO, even "Hollywood," knows that.

Q: No offense, but I don't think you, Hogan, Nash, or DiBiase has any business criticizing anyone for having a big ego.

A: You sayin' I have a big ego, punk? You're hurtin' my feelings, man. I'm a team player.

"If The Giant had his act together, he'd be perfect for the NWO. Take one look at the guy and you see he has all the tools. His problem is that his ego is too big."

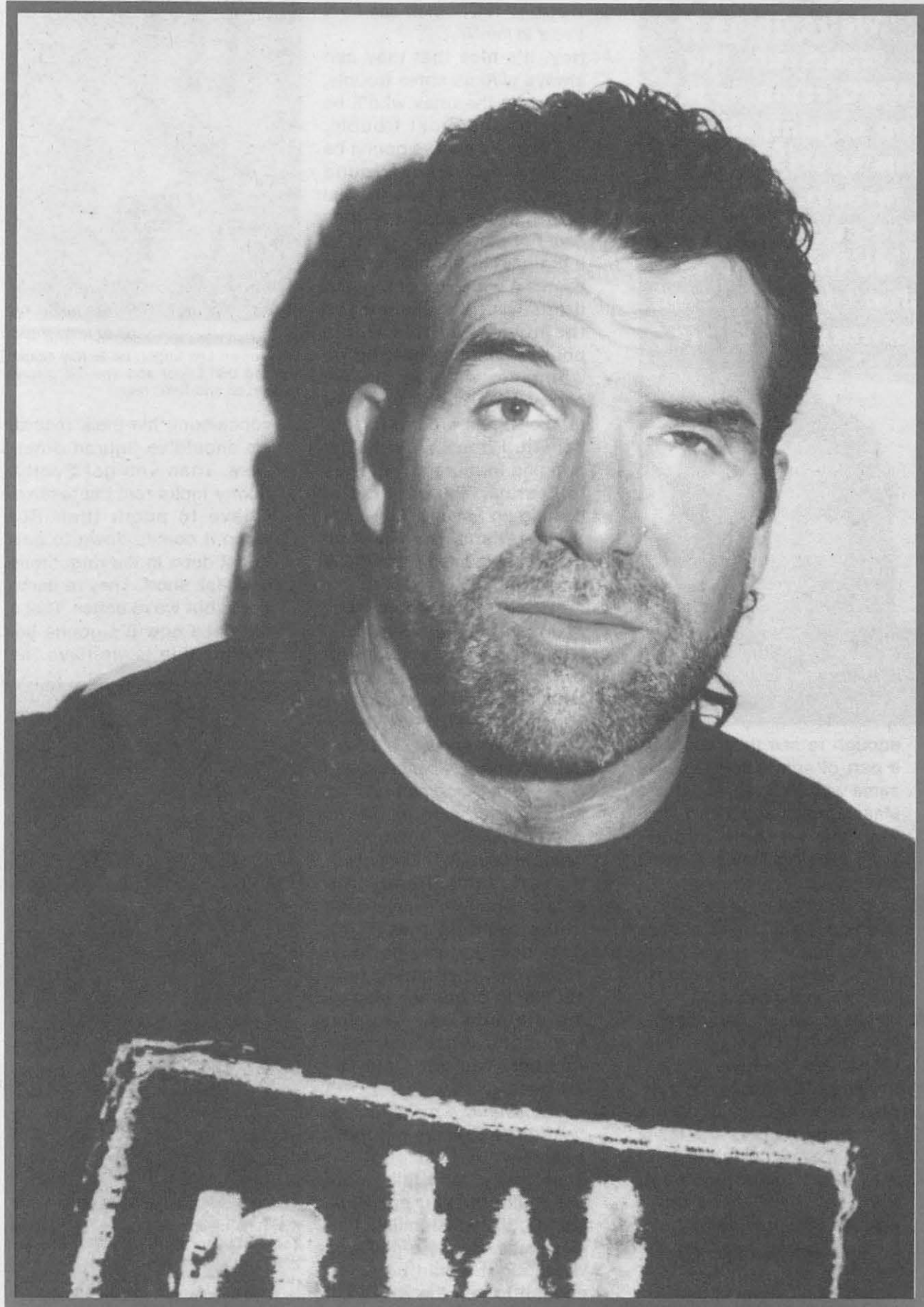
I don't care about making myself look good. Never have.

Q: Are you concerned that Lex Luger has an alliance with *The Giant*?

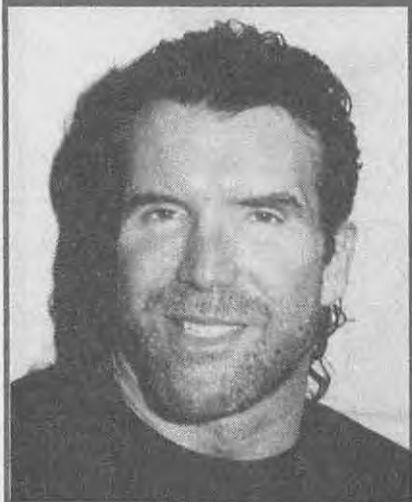
A: Luger, now there's another guy who's too dumb to know the score. He could be a big part of the NWO, but like *The Giant*, he's blowing it. How long do you think they'll be able to stay together? They'll never agree on anything, bro'. C'mon, get serious.

Q: With all the new additions to the NWO, how much do you guys agree on?

A: We agree on plenty. It's sweet. The main thing we agree on is that we're going to make sure the NWO remains the top organization in this sport, now and forever. We have the people here to do that. Guys like Big Bubba and Marcus Bagwell joined us because they were smart



"We're going to make sure the NWO remains the top organization in this sport, now and forever. We have the people here to do that ... If we don't keep moving forward, we'll die."



enough to see they could be a part of something big. The same with Mr. Wall Street and Masa Chono and Scott Norton. Smart men. If we don't keep moving forward, we'll die.

Q: Eric Bischoff said he wants everyone in WCW to convert their contracts into NWO contracts. Do you want all those wrestlers in the NWO?

A: I'd like to see as many people join the NWO as possible. Like I said, we have to keep growing. We get more support every day because everybody realizes the NWO is a wave of the future, and they want to be part of it. NWO for life. But we don't want to eliminate WCW completely. It's just gonna be the number-two organization. Guess who's number one?

Q: Wouldn't WCW then still be a threat to the NWO?

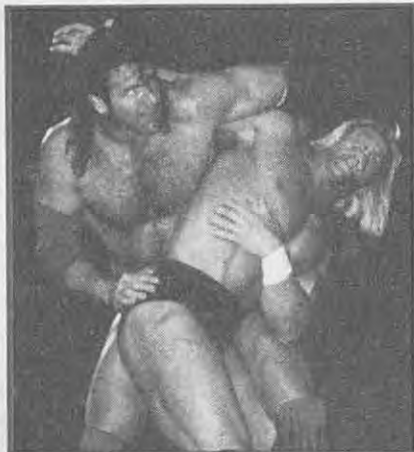
A: Hey, it's nice that they can always give us some trouble, but we're the ones who'll be causing the most trouble. The NWO is always gonna be setting the agenda around here, bro'. WCW has to deal with that the best way they can. For them, that's gotta be a big pain in the butt, but for us, it's a whole lot of fun. Put it this way: It's like me and the guys have this whole pool of talent to beat up on whenever we want to. We can't let WCW die! We want to keep them around for our benefit. I hope WCW keeps bringing in more guys for us to beat up. You get tired of beating up Savage, Piper, the Steiners, and The Giant all the time. We need fresh WCW blood.

Q: What about your own situation? You mentioned the Steiners. I think I know what your answer will be, but I'll ask anyway. What happened at Souled Out. You got pinned by Rick Steiner. The Steiners should be the tag team champions, but because it was Randy Anderson and not Nick Patrick who made the count, you and Nash got to keep the belts. Isn't that unfair?

A: No way, man. Randy Anderson shouldn't have been in the building that night. He's lucky he only got fired from WCW. They should have put him in prison for what he did. He didn't buy a ticket that night. What happened was fair. You gotta play by the rules.

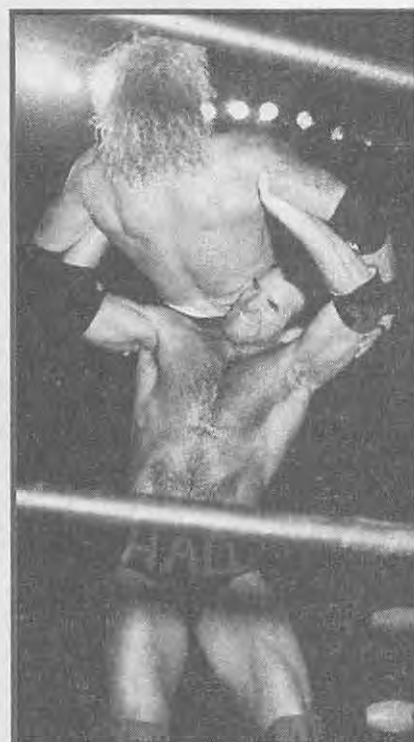
Q: I think it's only a matter of time before the Steiners get those belts.

A: Yeah, okay, let's talk about the Steiners. You got Rick, the "Dogfaced Gremlin." Perfect name. Here's a guy who we thought would be smart enough to join the NWO, but



Scott Hall uses an abdominal stretch to wear down Lex Luger. He hardly seems worried that Luger and The Giant have formed an anti-NWO team.

considering his track record, we should've figured otherwise. Then you got Scotty. Scotty looks real impressive, I have to admit that. But when it comes down to getting it done in the ring, those boys fall short. They're damn good, but we're better. That's it. That's how it's gonna be. Bottom line is we have the



It's quite clear that Hall is 100 percent committed to the NWO. When Dallas Page turned down an offer to join, Hall rewarded him with an "Outsiders Edge." He says the group is still expanding.



Hall knocks The Barbarian to the mat with a clothesline. He and Nash hold victories over Barbarian and Meng and most of WCW's other top tag teams. But not the Steiners. Not yet.

power of the NWO behind us, and they don't.

Q: *True. They don't always have 10 men interfering on their behalf.*

A: That's all you look at, right? What happens at the end of the match. You're like all those WCW people who are too blind to see the big picture. So a few of our people hit the ring and a few of their people hit the ring. That's wrestling. I'm talking about being part of the elite. You know, NWO for life. It's still hard for guys like you to accept the NWO. Hey, in a way, I can't blame you. A year ago, we didn't even exist. But now we've changed this business so much that nobody knows exactly what the effect we've had.

Q: *Who is the leader of the NWO?*

A: Everybody in the NWO is a leader, and that's not just talk. The NWO does things different. We all have a say in what goes on in this organi-

zation. I'm not saying we vote on everything. Sometimes Eric Bischoff or "Hollywood" make bold moves, and they don't have time for consultation. That's cool with me, because I trust those guys. I know they're committed to the NWO as much as I am—and it was me and Nash who got this whole thing going.

Q: *Any new people coming in?*

A: Definitely, but if you want names, don't ask me. There are guys who are anxious to join us, but right now, they're caught up in other situations. It can be tough when you have to untangle yourself from some mess. I'll tell you this: When those men finally do become a part of the NWO, you won't believe how powerful we'll be, and you know how strong we are now.

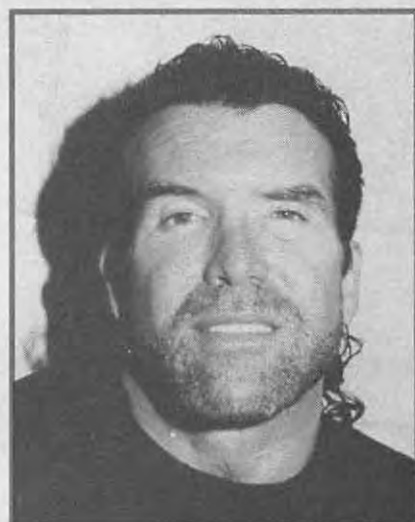
Q: *Do you see any danger in overreaching? For example, is it possible for Bischoff to head both WCW and the NWO?*

A: Eric can do whatever he wants, bro'. The man is a

genius. I don't see any problem with what he's doing. No problem for us. It gives the NWO the maximum advantage. That's all we're shooting for: the maximum advantage. We never said we'd achieve it in six days or six weeks. We know that sometimes we'll need to be patient and let situations play out. We're keeping everything in perspective. When we say we want to be the complete organization, we're serious. And it's about time you got serious. When you gonna recognize the NWO as a separate league?

Q: *That's not my decision.*

A: It's your cop-out. Anyway, you guys will come around eventually. The NWO is setting the new standard, and there's nothing you can do to stop us. □



"I hope WCW keeps bringing in more guys for us to beat up. You get tired of beating up Savage, Piper, the Steiners, and The Giant all the time. We need fresh WCW blood."

SA-BOO



Photos by Jason Ross Lavin



Destroying Himself For Your Approval

**Go figure: The
fans who consider
themselves the
most discerning
fans in the sport
are actually booing
Sabu! Why?
Because he won't
commit actual
suicide in the ring?**

By Liz Hunter

SABU WAS MAKING his way across the ECW dressing room. Each step brought pain not only to him, but to those who watched him. Every movement of this body that has been in such incredible battles seemed forced, as if the body was protesting each limb's insistence that it move forward, ever forward.

The incredible star paused to lean against a table. He straightened his body, stretched his arms into the sky, and let out a moan as his midsection arched this way, then that. One wrestler near Sabu later claimed he heard a snapping noise: Sabu's ribs, perhaps, or his spine wrenching back into place.

Sabu's postmatch routine?
Nope.

This was the image of Sabu coming *in* to the dressing room for an ECW card recently. Aching. Fatigued. Fresh (fresh? hardly!) from flying halfway around the world from Japan.

Any sane man would have gone home, crawled into bed, and stayed there for a week. Gotten some sleep. Let his body heal. Allowed his screaming bones to quiet down. Cooled down the burning muscles and flaming cartilage.

Sabu is not a sane man.

"Bor-ing! Bor-ing!"

The chants of those few ECW fans pierce Sabu's ears like flaming knives.

Boring? The man who took the practice of hurling his body through wooden tables and raised it to the level of a fine art? Boring?



Having just gotten back from Japan, Sabu was very tired going into his recent match with Perry Saturn. Saturn didn't take it easy on him, though. He kicked him right in the stomach as Sabu attempted this dive.

"You know, sometimes a few—not all—of these ECW fans can really be *too* tough," Rob Van Dam said as he watched Sabu wrestle Perry Saturn at the ECW Arena in Philadelphia. "Here you have a guy who goes all-out, lives on the edge, who's given his all for the fans in this building, and some of them chant boring at the guy?"

"Let me tell you something," Van Dam continued. "Any one of these people would be dead—literally dead!—if they once tried what Sabu's been doing nightly for years. Hear that? Now wait ... watch what Sabu's gonna do now."

What Sabu did was turn his game up yet another notch. It was painful to see, because it was obvious—to anyone who wasn't screaming for blood—that Sabu's body did not want to be turned up a notch.

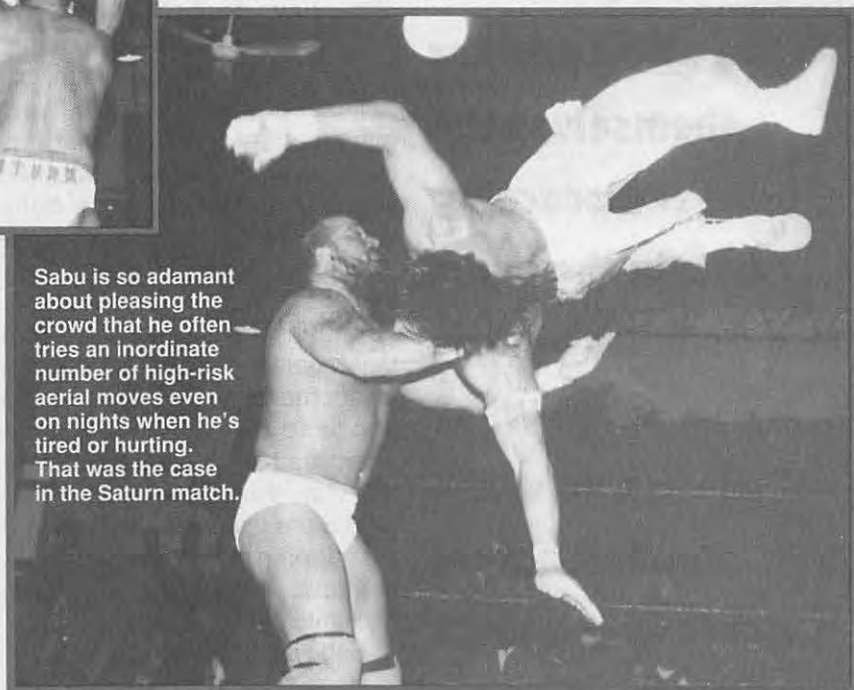
But Sabu is that kind of a competitor. He is obsessed with

always taking his game to the next level, and is profoundly dissatisfied if he hears even one fan voicing dissent about his match.



"When I managed Sabu, I was stunned *every night* by the level of his dedication to his craft," said Paul E. Dangerously. "He's

Sabu is so adamant about pleasing the crowd that he often tries an inordinate number of high-risk aerial moves even on nights when he's tired or hurting. That was the case in the Saturn match.

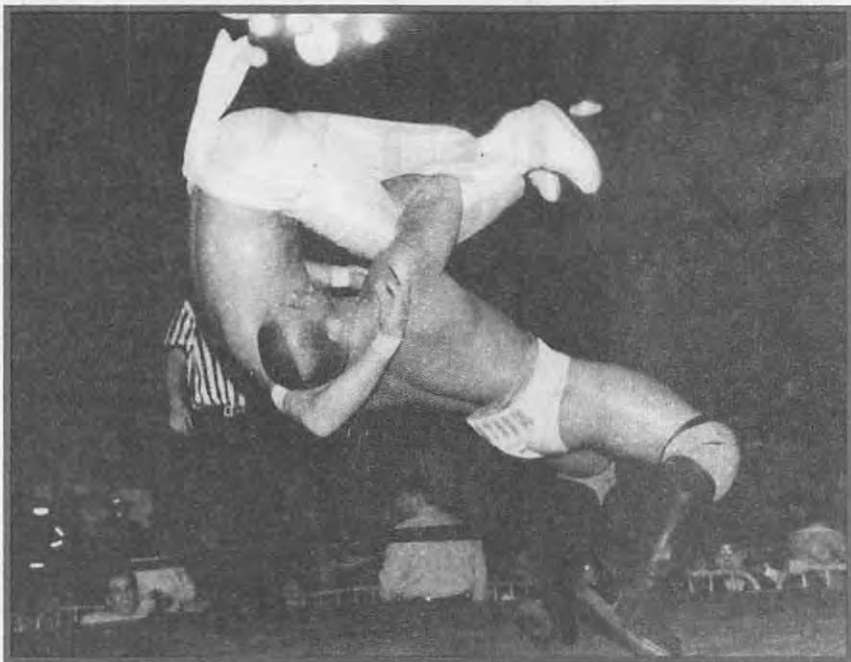


not just about pushing the envelope; he's pushing the whole damn box of envelopes!"

"Sabu is at a dangerous crossroads in his career right now," said ECW blow-by-blow man Joey Styles. "In many ways he's the victim of his own greatness. The fans keep asking him to take his game to the next level, and he feels he's cheating them if he doesn't comply. But how much further can he go, especially having to wrestle in pain every night? Then he goes out there, hears a few people booing him, and hears some people cheering for Taz, and it's eating away at him.

"Sabu isn't just about winning matches right now—he's about trying to win *all* the people over to his side again," Styles said. "But you have some people in the ECW audience who are as insane in their attitude toward the sport as Sabu is, but on a different level. I mean, you're asking me? I don't find Sabu boring, ever, at all, and I think people who chant boring during his matches ought to go back and watch their tapes of Hacksaw Duggan and The Honky Tonk Man.

"But by the same token, God

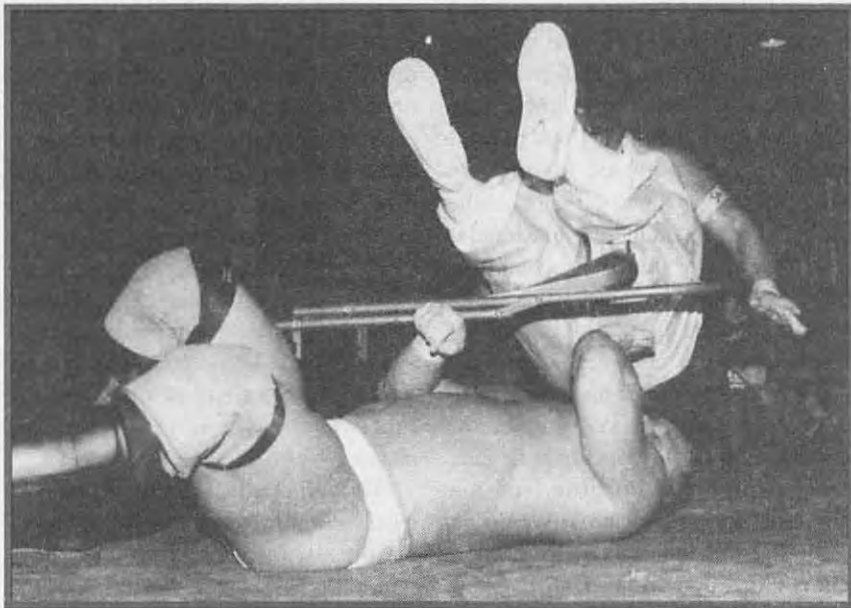


When he's not at 100 percent and still tries to wrestle as if he is, Sabu sets himself up for disaster ... or at least a lot of pain. After Sabu missed a few moves, Saturn punished him with a bone-rattling suplex.

helps those who help themselves, and Sabu isn't gonna get any slack from the fans unless he starts giving himself some slack," Styles added. "He can't go into that ring after wrestling 12 nights straight in Japan, hoping a plane, sprinting from the airport to the arena, and practically getting into the ring from the

taxicab. He can't. He just can't, and I don't care if he *is* Sabu. Nobody can. At some point you have to recharge your batteries, refuel, and replenish so that you *can* compete at your best, because ECW fans don't accept anything less than the best."

And maybe that's what the fans are reacting to, after all. Not that



Sabu and Saturn used chairs to punish each other in their match, but chairs are used in so many ECW matches. What can Sabu do to top himself? Maybe we ought to just appreciate what he has already shown us.

Sabu is a boring wrestler, because on his worst night, he's anything but boring. But Sabu is in a place right now in which he's wrestling at less than full capacity. And to an ECW fan, that's a worse sin than being Eric Bischoff's hair-dresser.

Sabu came staggering into the dressing room after his match with Perry Saturn. Sweating. Chest heaving as his exhausted lungs gulped oxygen. Eyes a twisted blend of fatigue and adrenaline.

He paused to lean against a



Some say Sabu is too willing to take a lot of punishment from his opponents, that he does it to show how tough he is. He shouldn't have to prove that to anyone at this point.

table. He straightened his body, stretched his arms into the sky, and let out a blood-curdling shriek as his midsection arched this way, then that, stretching his muscles and wrenching his spine back into place. Then he kicked a chair across the dressing room as he cursed something in his native language.

As Sabu disappeared into the showers, someone asked his interpreter what Sabu had yelled.

"He said," the interpreter responded, "that he would try harder next time." □

The telephone wires sizzle each month, as two top wrestlers voice their rage and hostility toward each other. Here's the unedited transcript of their conversation, your chance to feel the raw emotion that results when two antagonists face off ... One On One

ONE ON ONE

THE YEAR 1996 was hardly a stellar one for longtime manager Jim Cornette. Not only did he fail to manage a champion for those 12 months, but he also lost a lion's share of his stable to former attorney Clarence Mason. There was one constant, however, throughout the year—Big Van Vader.

Although Vader never won the WWF World title, Cornette was able to get him numerous shots at the championship. And when Vader was not wrestling for the title, he always remained in contention, thanks to the shrewdness of his manager. But distractions from Mason and a need to look for new talent changed Cornette and infuriated Vader.

Their relationship now looks to be over. For several weeks this winter, Vader came to the ring alone. Rumors of bickering between him and Cornette were buzzing throughout the WWF. Then, at the Royal Rumble, Paul Bearer interfered on behalf of Vader in his match with The Undertaker and helped him gain a very important victory. A new and unholy alliance was formed between the two. But many fans asked the same question: What about Cornette?

Other questions remain as well. Is Cornette still Vader's manager? Is Vader still under contract to him, or has Paul Bearer officially secured the behemoth's services? We attempted to gain insight on those and more issues when we gave Big Van Vader and Jim Cornette the opportunity to go "One On One."



"Me and Bearer have an agreement; that's all you need to know. At the Royal Rumble, we had the same goal. We both wanted to destroy The Undertaker. Now we want the WWF title."

—Big Van Vader

JIM CORNETTE: All right, Vader. I know I haven't been around as much as I should have, but what the heck is up with you and Paul Bearer?

VAN VADER: I don't know why you're worried about that. You haven't been worried about me for months now. Bearer gave me the shot in the arm that I needed at the Royal Rumble.

JC: The only shot Bearer can provide is a shot of formaldehyde to keep a rotting carcass from stinking up the funeral home. That weeble couldn't manage his way out of his trousers.

VV: So where have you been, because you haven't been with me? You're the one who promised me fame and fortune in the WWF. You promised me the WWF title. Then when Clarence Mason stole your other guys, you promised me your undivided attention. What's up?

JC: Look, Vader, I'm a manager. I

need a stable of wrestlers if Camp Cornette is going to take over the WWF. I've been out scouting new talent every day. You as much as anyone should understand the importance of that.

VV: The only thing that I understand is beating people up. It's all that matters to me. I need a manager to take care of all the business stuff.

JC: But I'm trying to assemble a superstable and take care of your affairs as well. You're on the road every night. I know you think you've gotten the short end of the stick, but that will change if you get rid of Bearer. We're a team.

VV: What about the Rumble then? You couldn't even make it for one of the biggest matches in my career? A win over The Undertaker brought me back to where I belong.

JC: You know how I feel about The Undertaker.

ONE



"I can get you a title shot anytime you want one. Give me a chance. I'll slide Monsoon so many bananas that the old fool will give you whatever you want."
—Jim Cornette

VV: You're afraid of him. Ever since he put you in that bodybag, you don't even want to hear his name again.

JC: That was terrifying. I still have nightmares about it. I almost suffocated to death. And Mama, well, seeing that almost gave her a coronary.

VV: So you can see that I need someone who isn't afraid of The Undertaker.

JC: But Paul Bearer? Give me a daggone break. That Addams Family reject is in a major slump. You honestly think that a guy who has to take care of Mankind is going to have time for someone like you?

VV: He was in my corner when I needed him.

JC: I also see that you got caught on the wrong end of that urn Bearer has when you teamed up with Mankind the next night.

VV: That was Mankind's mistake, not Paul Bearer's.

JC: So you signed a contract with him?

VV: Me and Bearer have an agreement; that's all you need to know. At the Royal Rumble, we had the same goal. We both wanted to destroy The Undertaker. Now we both want the WWF title.

JC: I can get you a title shot anytime you want one. Give me a chance. I'll slide Monsoon so many bananas that the old fool will give you whatever you want. Remember my experience and vast resources.

VV: That hasn't done anything for me recently.

JC: Look at everything all we've been through together. Who brought you to the WWF? Who got you in the Rumble last year? Who got your suspension lifted when you attacked

Monsoon? Me.

VV: Didn't Clarence Mason get that suspension lifted?

JC: Only under my orders. I even got you that title shot at SummerSlam against Michaels, remember? If it wasn't for crooked officiating, you'd be wearing that WWF belt around your waist today.

VV: And you'd still be out scouting new talent.

JC: Hey, no matter how big you are, you still need some reinforcements.

VV: Not when you're the man. Besides, who are you gonna get to join you?

JC: Uh ... um ... well, nothing's set in stone yet. You'll just have to trust me. Is that too much to ask?

VV: Yeah, it is. Bearer is content to manage me, just me. If I'm going to get back into the title picture, I need that.

JC: But I have strategies worked out that will help you beat Austin, Bret Hart, Undertaker, Michaels. They'll be roadkill, brother. But you're going to have to trust me.

VV: I don't need a strategy. I just go in that ring and do what I do best. That's destroy anything that gets in my way. Whether it's one opponent, four opponents, or 10,000 opponents, I can take care of business in the ring. My strategy will be to pound them all into the ground and Vader bomb them.

JC: Let's just wipe the slate clean. We can be a dangerous duo.

VV: And so can Bearer and me. I got Undertaker's number. No one else can claim that. Hart and Austin and Michaels are just ragdolls for me to throw around. Soon Vader will get his due. The WWF championship.

JC: Look, Vader, all I ask is for you to think about it. I can make it worth your while. Whatever your arrangement with Bearer is, we'll change it. Just a few phone calls from Mama's attorneys and you'll be back where you belong.

VV: I belong in title contention. That's where I am right now, and I want to stay there, no matter who's managing me. □

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Sincerely Yours
(Continued from page 5)



The NWO still has possession of the WCW World title, but reader Michael Jones predicts that the group will fall apart soon. He thinks Hulk Hogan's ego will have something to do with it.

glass coming up through the carpet. As a wrestling fan with a VCR and some intelligence, it is easy to notice the cover-up job they're trying to do. Unfortunately for the NWO, Piper's victory over the almighty Hogan isn't a bad dream, but it is their worst nightmare come true.

BARRY SWANSON
Port Arthur, TX

WORLD TUMBLING DOWN

It appears that the New World Order is finally crumbling. It began with the debate over Six. Then The Giant's defection. Now it appears Hall might be unhappy with the group. For several weeks, he didn't join the NWO at any of its gatherings. The foundation of the NWO has been rattled, and it looks like WCW is poised to defeat them. These factors will lead to the ultimate fall of the NWO:

1. The continuous signing of untalented wrestlers. Come on, Big Bubba Rogers should not be a

member of the NWO. He can't even get his name straight. Marcus Bagwell is a bad seed. Just look at how many tag team partners he has had in the last three years (2 Cold Scorpio, The Patriot, Scotty Riggs).

2. The collision of egos. This is a common argument used by the critics. I don't think Scott Hall and Kevin Nash will be able to deal with Hulk Hogan's self-serving ego much longer.

3. Sting. It is apparent that Sting has not joined the NWO, and when he gets his head straight, he will be able to lead WCW to victory over the NWO.

Remember, though, that if WCW is to topple the NWO, it must be united. With the way things are going between the Horsemen, Dungeon of Doom, and Sting, it doesn't appear that they are united enough to conquer the renegade group just yet.

MICHAEL JONES
Boston, MA ☐

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On The Road

(Continued from page 10)



It was Shane Douglas to whom the masked man wanted to talk that night, but Rude never feuded with Douglas, so the masked man's comment about wanting to get even with Shane was confusing.

guys all the time."

Rude never liked dealing with the press. The media always viewed him as too self-centered, and as a man who refused to address his few weaknesses. Rude never saw himself as having any weaknesses, and as the taller of the two blondes fed him grapes, I could see why.

"So, you think it's me?" Rude asked.

"I'm not sure," I said. "I hoped I'd get the answer today."

"And what do you think now?"

"I'm not sure."

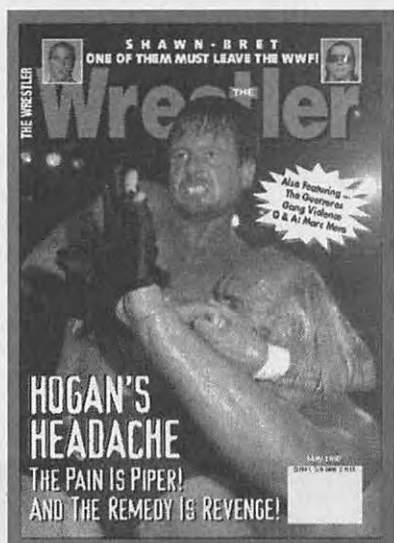
But at that moment, both women started stroking his chest. Why would Rude want to leave this? What's the attraction of the ring?

I couldn't even begin to imagine.



This Month In...

THE Wrestler

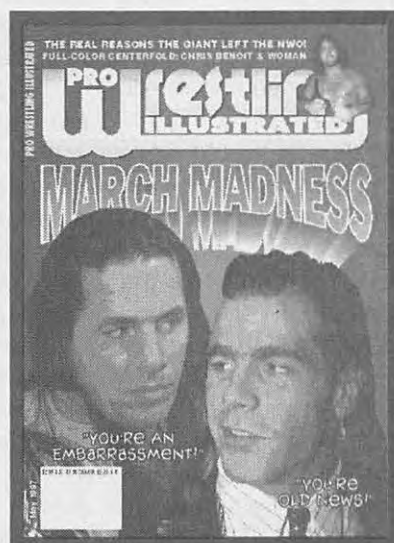


HULK HOGAN is turning into a great liar. So are the others in the NWO. They're trying to convince everyone that Hogan beat **RODDY PIPER** at Starrcade, but we all know he didn't. Deep down inside, though, he must realize the only way he can get rid of Piper is to beat him convincingly! ... The **SHAWN MICHAELS-BRET HART** feud is out of hand. Would you believe that even their friends are saying one of them must leave the WWF?! ... There are more supergroups in wrestling now than ever before. We'll tell you why gang violence is overrunning the sport.

All this—and much more!—in the May 1997 issue of *The Wrestler*

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PRO Wrestling ILLUSTRATED



"You're an embarrassment! "You're old news!" Ah, yes, the war of words (and fists) between **BRET HART** and **SHAWN MICHAELS** is getting uglier (and more exciting) all the time. This feud is already shaping up to be the best of 1997! ... Everyone in WCW is thrilled to have **THE GIANT** back on their side, but was his split with the NWO all about a title shot? Did **STING** have something to do with it? Or was it a high-ranking Time Warner executive who changed the big man's thinking? ... Don't miss the full-color centerfold of **HULK HOGAN**!

All this—and much more!—in the May 1997 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated*

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Behind the Door

(Continued from page 12)

turn in outstanding Royal Rumble performances only to be forgotten because they weren't standing at the end. Austin was the star of the Rumble, win or lose, and the fact that he won made his performance all the more obvious.

But what if the referees didn't have their backs turned and Austin lost?

Well, then Austin would have been yet another Rumble loser who was actually a winner. And he would've been another good reason for the WWF to change the Rumble format.

I know I've written in the past that the WWF shouldn't play games with the Royal Rumble; switching from a 60-minute to a 45-minute format is a mistake the WWF needs to correct. But the Rumble needs to

award the wrestler who lasts the longest and eliminates the most wrestlers, not the wrestler who gets the luck of the draw and is the last man into the ring. That's why the Rumble is the only wrestling event in which it might be a good idea to keep score.

The WWF can't fool around with the Rumble; the prize for winning it, a shot at the World champion at WrestleMania, is too great. Luck shouldn't play a role in who gets that coveted shot on wrestling's most important day of the year. So let's explore some options:

The WWF could switch to a pure battle royal format, but that would take away from the uniqueness of the Rumble.

The WWF could go to a format in which the winning wrestler is the one who eliminates the greatest number of wrestlers. But that would punish the last wrestlers into the ring. Another possibility, in which the winner is the wrestler who lasts the longest, would also punish the last wrestlers into the ring or, possibly, benefit the wrestler who avoids action.

Keeping score is difficult and the Rumble, as it is now, comes as close as anything to being the perfect wrestling event.

But if one Royal Rumble is great, wouldn't two Royal Rumbles be even better?

That's right, two Royal Rumbles, both on the same night. Royal Rumble I would be the first match on the card and would use a 30-minute format. Royal Rumble II would be the final match on the card, also under the 30-minute format. To make things fair, the order of entry

for the first Rumble would be reversed for the second Rumble. The overall winner of the Rumble would be determined by a combined score based on time in the ring and wrestlers eliminated, with bonus points awarded for order of elimination.

Now this might sound awfully complicated, but it's nothing today's modern electronic scoreboards couldn't handle. And performances turned out by wrestlers such as Bret Hart, Davey Boy Smith, and Steve Austin wouldn't go unrewarded.

Perhaps this isn't the best idea, but it's certainly something to think about. ☐

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WWF President Gorilla Monsoon declared Austin the winner of the Rumble but did not award him a World title match at WrestleMania. Rosenbaum suggests Monsoon and the WWF tinker with the Rumble format.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

Wrestling historians, rejoice! Some of the back issues in this ad have not been offered for sale for more than a decade—but a recent transfer of warehouse inventory from New York to Pennsylvania uncovered a small supply of these classic publications! Obviously, supplies are extremely limited, so all magazines will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis only. Prices quoted are based on the rarity of the issue and the number of available copies. For speediest service, use VISA or MasterCard or make payment by money order or certified check. Please don't send cash! Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime chance to own a memorable piece of wrestling history! Once they're gone, they'll never be offered for sale again—so order today!

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The Insider

(Continued from page 14)

cago's United Center.

The Giant is neutral by default. He hosed WCW, then was hosed by Hogan and company. Many in his old federation are hesitant to take him back for fear of another betrayal. The Giant, as good as he is, has proved that he is best with in a unit. He may be 7'4", but he may also lack the ability to stand alone in this battle.

The Nasty Boys offended both groups with their heinous and stupid actions, along with their body odor. Since they tried to join Hogan's gang and failed, they have been exiled by WCW to a place akin to Superman's Phantom Zone.

Then there's The Booty Man, or whatever he's calling himself now. I'm hesitant to even mention his name for fear that it would change

by the time this column is completed. Booty/Bruti/Beefcake/Butcher/No Name was the first to defect to the NWO after Hogan, but he quickly found out Hogan didn't want him. I wonder where he'll show up next.

In that age-old classic *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer*, the title character visited the Land of Misfit Toys. Whether by decree or choice, these seven out-of-place misfit wrestlers could band together and give fans the ultimate three-way dance. My reaction? A big, fat yawn.

Remember the good old days when wrestlers faced wrestlers? When so-called supergroups were content to dominate with victories and title belts. Now no one is an individual. There are big groups with little groups carrying on feuds

with each other and other groups. To throw a third in the mix would convolute things even more.

And more chaos and confusion are the last things that your average wrestling fan needs.

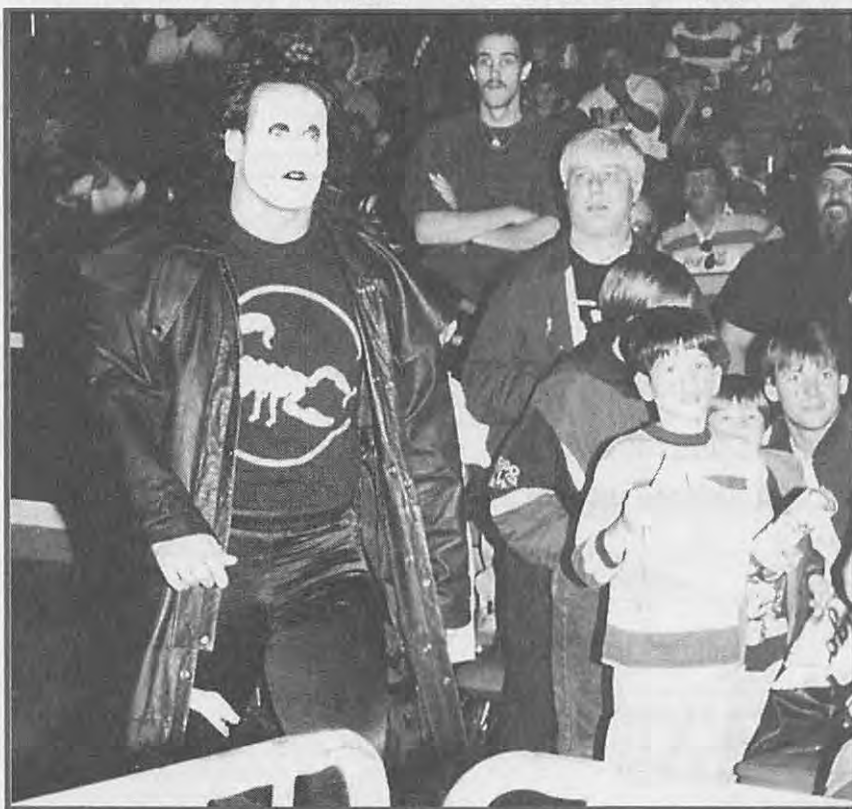
So we're back to that same-old question of, "What's up with Sting?" Instead of the standard shoulder-shrug, I will provide my unique and insightful analysis of the situation.

While he might briefly form the SWO (Sting World Order), I think Sting will eventually go back to WCW because he is still addicted to fan support. Even though most of the New World Order boys are cheered, Hogan is the exception. Why? Because he was a fan favorite for so long that people grew weary of his shtick. Now they're angry that he reacted the way he did. For Sting, it would be the same: Longtime stale fan favorite goes sour and joins the NWO. Been there, done that. Boo! Hiss!

Sting's fragile mental state could never handle anything less than adoration from the masses. Look for him to lock up again with WCW. But what about the attacks on wrestlers, you ask? Simple. I think he's waking them up and making them more battle-weary to face the real enemy. Then, like Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Sting will give his "I have returned speech" to cheering crowds.

That's what's up with Sting.

Earlier I compared Sting's rogue gallery to a bunch of misfits. Perhaps castaways would be more appropriate. As was the case on *Gilligan's Island*, there are seven, and they seem to be lost on an island unto themselves. But that analogy is hopelessly flawed. There isn't a professor in this bunch. □



I guess we all have Sting to thank for starting this new group of wrestlers with no loyalty to either WCW or the NWO. Great ... just what I needed, another reason not to like Sting.

On Assignment

(Continued from page 16)

nerve. Perhaps now he'll forget about the bad service and plate full of grease and bones long enough to talk.

"Prove? I'll tell ya what I have to prove," Funk said while pointing a fat-covered rib in my direction. "I am a former heavyweight champion of the world, and I still get no respect. My reign is always talked about as accidental because Dory couldn't make it to the arena for his title shot.

"Then after I proved myself worthy, there were still nay-sayers. But I shut them up in a hurry. And now there is a whole new generation of fans who think the ol' Funker is past his prime. Well, I'm fixin' to end that myth."

"What do you have in mind?" I inquired, satisfied that I had rattled the veteran into talking.

"I'm going to the Rumble tomorrow night and win, period," said Funk. "I'm gonna prove that I can be a contender and a world champion once again. I'll show this 'new generation' that there is a lot of fight left in Terry Funk."

"What about ECW? What will your accomplishments in the WWF do to your status there?" I asked.

"Not a damn thing. I'm not tied to any promotion, and I never will be. I wrestle where I want and

when I want. That title is not far from my grasp either. Heck, I could unify those dang belts and never let them go."

Funk's intensity enthralled me. I forgot about the plate of coagulating grease sitting in front of

"Where is my ... doggone it, I've had it! C'mon Liz, let's get out of here."

Funk's greasy hands grabbed what was my favorite white blazer as we left. He refused to pay the bill, and no one in the restaurant was interested in his money or his presence any longer.

We stood outside the restaurant. What my interview lacked in quantity, it made up for in quality. The Texas night air began to cool.

"Where to now?" I asked Funk. "Don't tell me that a few ribs filled you up."

"No, but I got other things on my mind," said Funk. "I got some preparation to do."

"Training?" I asked.

"Nope. But I know where they're doing that *Shotgun Saturday Night* show tonight. Wanna go crash the party with me?" Funk asked with a twinkle in his eye.

"No, thanks. Too much excitement for one night for me."

With that, we said our goodbyes. Later that night, I turned on the TV in my hotel room and watched as Funk made his presence known on *Shot-*

gun by calling out and brawling with Steve Austin.

Too much excitement? He may not have gotten all he wanted out of that restaurant, *Shotgun*, or the Rumble, but with Terry Funk, this is only the beginning. □

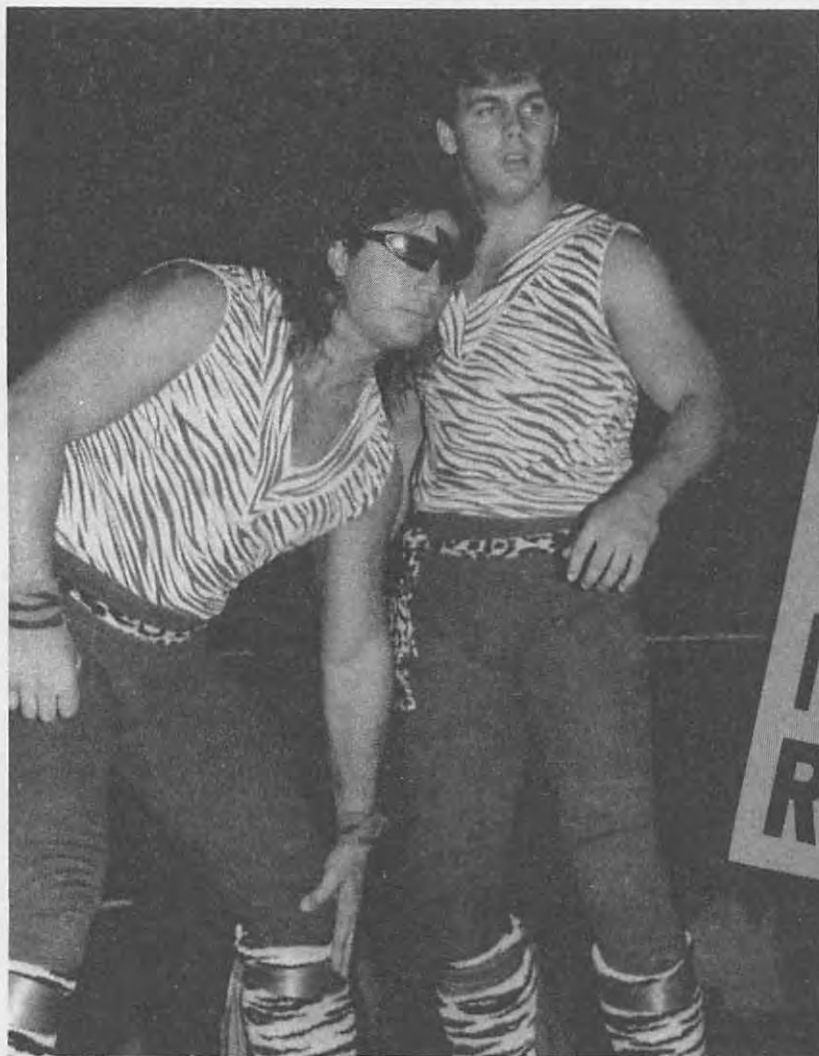


Funk is enjoying feuding with Brian Lee and others in ECW. More than 21 years after he won the NWA World title, he still thinks he has enough fight in him to win titles in both ECW and the WWF.

me. Here is a man who is beyond the so-called retirement age, and he burns with the same fire that he did in his younger days. Funk doesn't act old in or out of the ring.

"More food," Funk bellowed.

Beat Rose & Somers- Or Move On:



**THE
CLOCK
STRIKES
12
FOR THE
MIDNIGHT
ROCKERS!**

GREG GAGNE SAT back in his chair and scratched his head. Gagne had that look a person gets when he has something to say but doesn't know quite how to say it without embarrassing somebody. Finally, he stared directly into the eye of the reporter sitting in front of him and began to speak.

"Let me see how to word this," said Gagne. "The Midnight Rockers are a great team. In fact, I don't think

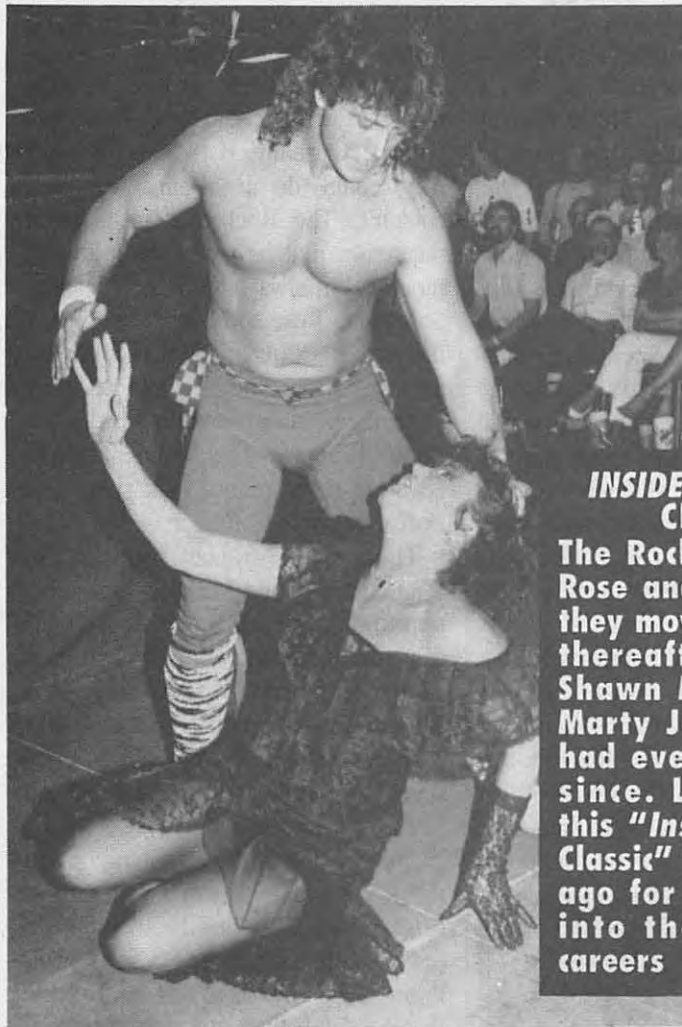
there's any doubt that they're the best tag team in the AWA, probably by far, and because of this, they should have won the World championship a long time ago. That's what concerns me, their inability to win the big one and beat Rose and Somers when it really counts. You gotta wonder.

"Now look at this," Gagne continued, starting to get more comfortable with what he was saying. "May 17, 1986. That's the night Buddy Rose and

Doug Somers won the belts from Scott Hall and Curt Hennig in Hammond, Indiana. Now, I don't think anybody thought that Rose and Somers would last more than a few weeks with the belts.

"By that time, the Rockers weren't considered main contenders because they had just come onto the scene. But they established themselves pretty quickly and I think that if they don't win the belts real soon, people are

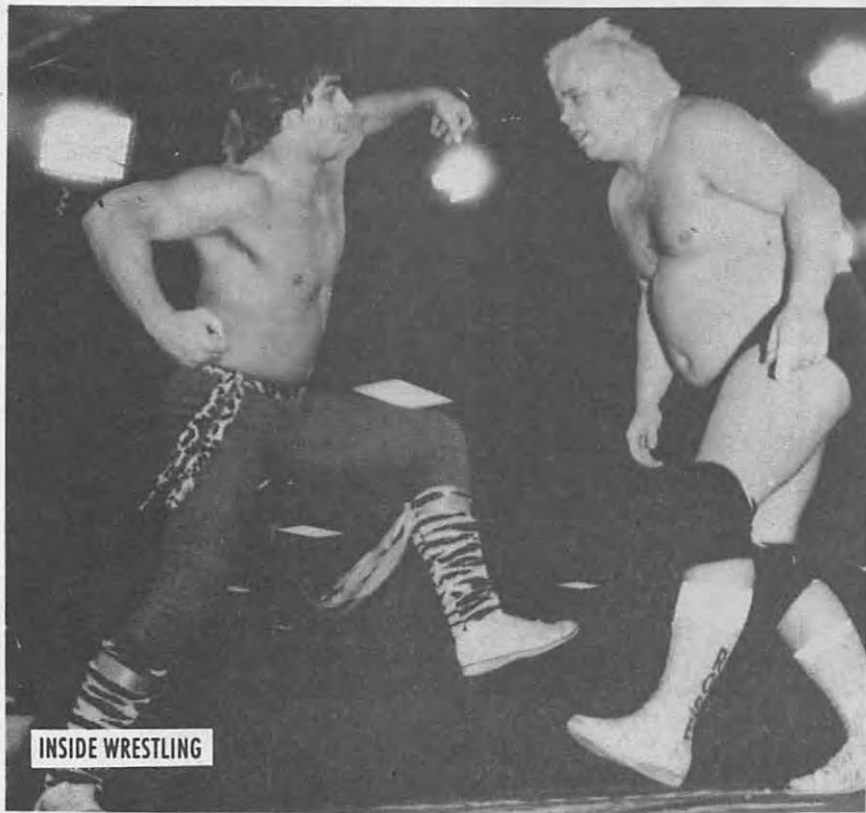
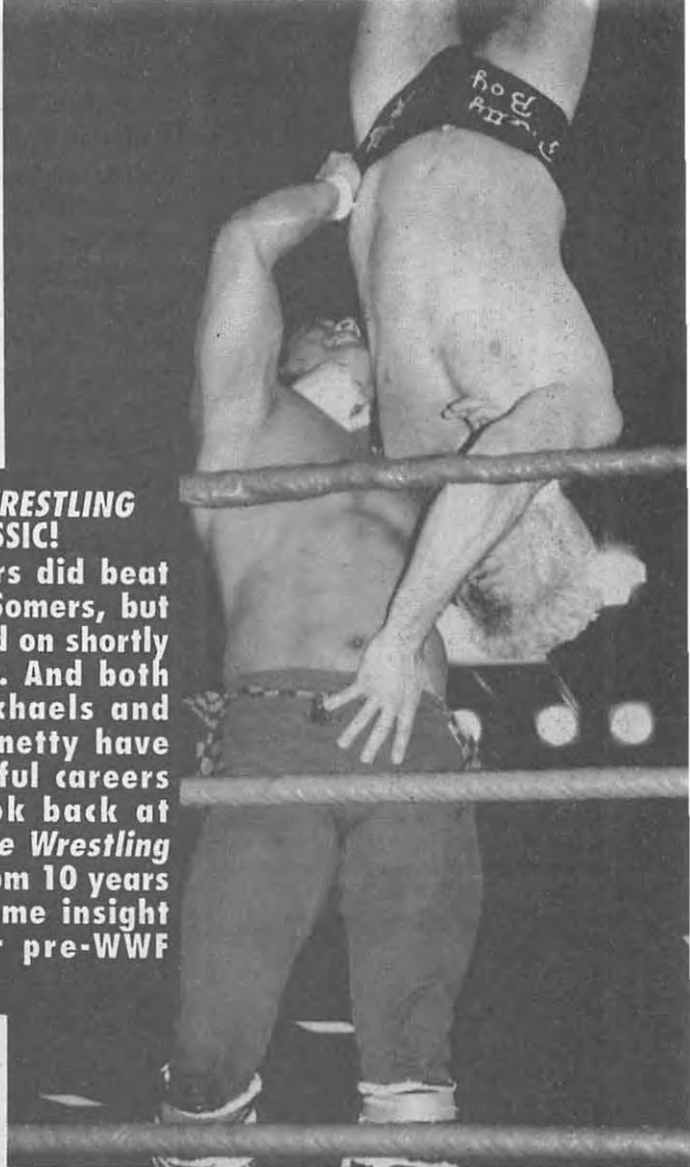
The time is now for Marty Jannetty and Shawn Michaels. They've had countless shots at the AWA World tag team title, but have been unable to grab the elusive hardware. If they don't win it soon, The Midnight Rockers might find that it's time to hit the road



INSIDE WRESTLING CLASSIC!

The Rockers did beat Rose and Somers, but they moved on shortly thereafter. And both Shawn Michaels and Marty Jannetty have had eventful careers since. Look back at this "Inside Wrestling Classic" from 10 years ago for some insight into their pre-WWF careers

Sherri Martel, manager of AWA World tag team champions Buddy Rose and Doug Somers, begs Marty Jannetty not to slap her (above). Jannetty, who is frustrated over Martel's frequent interference, suplexes Somers (right). Rose walks right into a punch from Shawn Michaels (below).



gonna lose some respect for them."

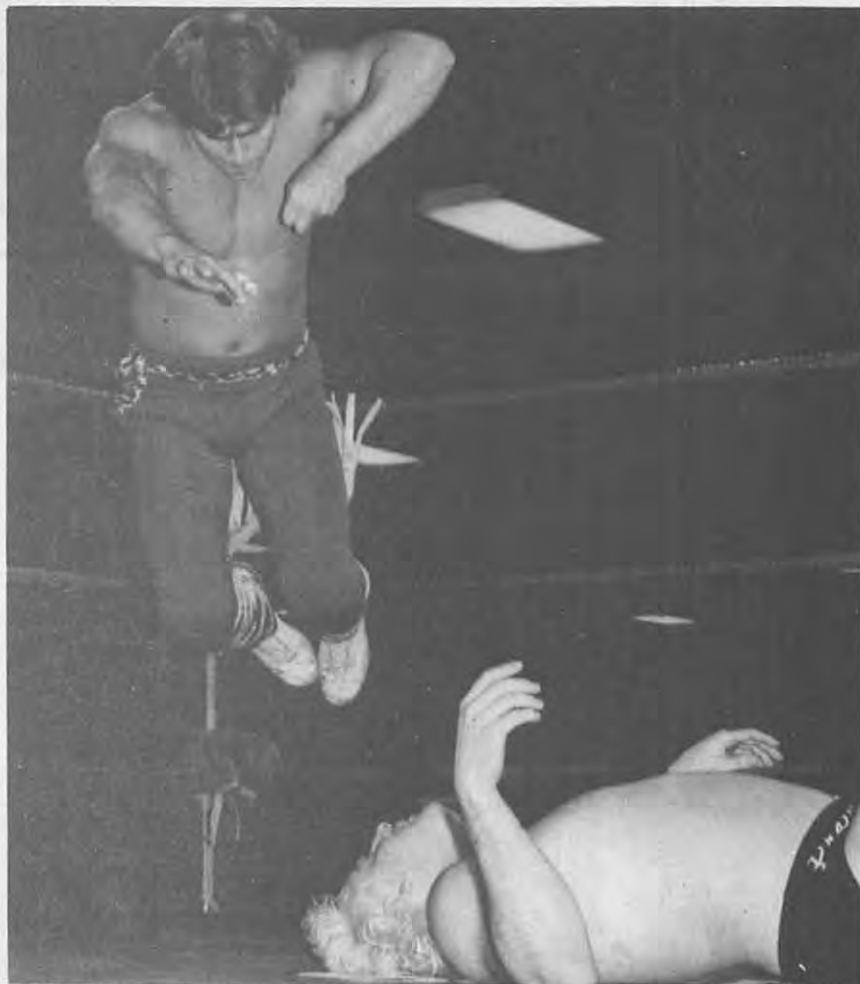
And so, after less than a year as a tag team, it has come down to this for Marty Jannetty and Shawn Michaels, The Midnight Rockers: Beat Rose and Somers for the World tag team belts or get out of the AWA.

Expectations can be the toughest obstacle for a young tag team to overcome. When Michaels and Jannetty first joined forces and became The Midnight Rockers, they were roundly criticized by the wrestling community. The name—and their style—was considered a cheap imitation of The Rock 'n' Roll Express and The Midnight Express.

It was quickly established, however, that the Rockers are a unique tag team. Their "rocker suplex" was just one of the many fabulous moves that



The Midnight Rockers execute their "rocker suplex" on Rose (above). Michaels launches a punch against Somers (below). If the Rockers don't win the AWA tag belts soon, perhaps they should rethink their future in the AWA.



set them apart from their NWA counterparts. Their youthful enthusiasm and dedication to the sport spawned a legion of loyal fans. The Midnight Rockers injected a dose of excitement into the AWA.

But soon, expectations turned into demands and The Midnight Rockers became victims of their own press clippings. The more the fans came to hate Rose and Somers, the more they wanted to see the belts around the waists of Jannetty and Michaels. The fans would accept a championship and nothing else. Presently, The Midnight Rockers are ranked ahead of Rose and Somers in *Inside Wrestling's* Top 15 (see page 32), but that won't help them win the championship.

The fans had their appetites further whetted in August, when Jannetty pinned Somers in St. Paul, Minnesota, and it appeared that the Rockers had won the belts. But the decision was reversed when it was ruled that Rose was the man who was legally supposed

to be in the ring. The belts were returned to Rose and Somers.

Still, the Rockers proved on that night that they could beat Rose and Somers. Certainly, if they did it once, they could do it again. But they couldn't. The Rockers won most of the return matches over the following months, but always by disqualification. Sometimes Rose and Somers would get themselves disqualified. Other times, manager Sherri Martel would do it for them. Some matches ended in double-disqualifications. The Midnight Rockers were never pinned, but they were no closer to the title.

Then, on Christmas night in St. Paul, Jannetty and Michaels took a big step toward the title. In a non-title steel cage match, Jannetty pinned Somers to earn another series of shots at the belt. It was an outstanding match and a clear-cut victory. From almost any standpoint, time was running out on Rose and Somers' title reign.

But time seems to be running out on the Rockers as well. "They just can't catch up to us so maybe they should just give up," suggested Somers. "You know, these guys have had tons of title matches and they still haven't won. They never will. There comes a time when you just gotta give up and face the facts."

For once, Somers might be right.

"It just seems like we're knocking at the door all the time and just can't bust through," said Michaels. "First of all, these guys are always getting themselves disqualified, but we should be able to stop that. It's very frustrating, that's all I can tell you, but we have this message for our fans. We're not gonna give up. We're gonna get those belts."

This time, it's now or never. The Midnight Rockers have had enough chances. So far, they've been fortunate that the AWA lacks tag teams. Otherwise, they would have never received so many title shots. But the fans' patience is running low. The matchmakers' patience is running low.

It's put up or shut up time. Do it now, or get out! That's the challenge facing The Midnight Rockers. □

BACK ISSUES OF

Inside Wrestling

Be sure to fill in the gaps in your collection of "the magazine that rips the lid off pro wrestling!" INSIDE WRESTLING gives you all the information you need to keep up with the pro wrestling scene! Avoid sellouts—order today!

August 1983/Stories include: JYD, Garvin, Sullivan, Lawler.
November 1984/Stories include: Rhodes, Rich, Hernandez, Warriors.
January 1987/Stories include: Rude-Flair, Piper, T.A., Taylor.
February 1987/Stories include: Hogan-Piper-Orndorff, Taylor, Flair.
April 1987/Stories include: Windham, Steamboat, Ellering, Duggan.
December 1987/Stories include: Freebirds, Rhodes, Magnum, Savage, Perez.
March 1988/Stories include: Bigelow, Adams, Koloff, Honky Tonk, Freebirds.
April 1988/Stories include: Luger-Flair, Warrior, Andre-Hogan-DiBiase.
June 1988/Stories include: Warriors, Savage, R&R Express, Baby Doll.
October 1988/Stories include: Megapowers-Megabucks, Horsemen, Lawler.
November 1988/Stories include: Rhodes, Kerry, Luger, Muraco, Freebirds.
December 1988/Stories include: Powers of Pain, Ultimate, Flair, Piper.
March 1989/Stories include: Hennig, Midnights, Fuller & Golden, Ultimate.
May 1989/Stories include: Hogan, Steiner, Morton, Bad Co., Taylor.
June 1989/Stories include: Hogan-Savage, Luger, Steamboat-Flair.
August 1989/Stories include: Hulkamania, Steamboat, Rude, Cornette.
September 1989/Stories include: Savage-Hogan, Luger, Mascaras, Rhodes.
October 1989/Stories include: Hall-Pillman-Vicious, Hennig, Warriors, Rhodes.
December 1989/Stories include: Rhodes, Flair, Hogan-Zeus, Embry.

January 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Sting-Flair, Roberts-DiBiase.
April 1990/Stories include: Starrcade '89, Ultimate, Rhodes, Sawyer.
June 1990/Stories include: Sting, Saito-Zbyszko, Earthquake, Ultimate.
July 1990/Stories include: Steiners, Sting, Warrior & Hogan, Earthquake.
August 1990/Stories include: Luger-Flair, Hogan, Warrior, Duggan.
September 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Duggan, JYD, Adams, Horsemen.
October 1990/Stories include: Sting, Legion of Doom, Bushwhackers, Gigante.
November 1990/Stories include: Flair, Hogan, Vicious, Slaughter, Oris.
December 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Sting, Kerry, Cornette, Zbyszko.
January 1991/Stories include: LOD, Adams, Steiners, Lawler-Funk.
February 1991/Stories include: Taylor, Hogan, Martel, Sting.
March 1991/Stories include: Hogan-Earthquake, Roberts-Martel, Sting.
April 1991/Stories include: Flair-Sting, Steiners, Piper, Zbyszko, Slaughter.
May 1991/Stories include: Savage-Warrior, Steiners, Sting, Virgil.
June 1991/Stories include: Steiners, LOD, Koloff, I-C belt, Dundees.
July 1991/Stories include: Hogan, Virgil, Nastys, Steiners, Spivey.
September 1991/Stories include: Justice-Hogan, Hyatt, Rude, Hennig.
October 1991/Stories include: Savage & Liz, Hogan & Warrior, Luger.

November 1991/Stories include: Hogan-Savage, Luger, Flair, War Games.
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May 1992/Stories include: Justice-Hogan, Liger, Gilbert, Repo Man.
June 1992/Stories include: Sting, Hogan, Race, Bagwell, Atlas.
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September 1992/Stories include: War Games, Hogan, Vader, Kamala.
November 1992/Stories include: Flair, Warrior, Vader, top rope rule.
March 1993/Stories include: Michaels, Koloff, Windham-Rhodes.
June 1993/Stories include: Doink, Vader-Sting, Hart, Steiners, Lawler.
July 1993/Stories include: Bravo, Gonzales, Bulldog, Ramon, Arn.
August 1993/Stories include: Hogan-Yokozuna, Hart, Christopher.
September 1993/Stories include: Steiners, Slamboree, Ramon, Sting & Smith.
October 1993/Stories include: SummerSlam, Money Inc., Vader-Vicious.
November 1993/Stories include: Bodies, Jannetty, Rude-Flair, Hogan, Luger.
December 1993/Stories include: Fyth, Austin, Luger, Yokozuna, Sting & Flair.
February 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Duggan, Doinks, Blond, holiday wishes.
March 1994/Stories include: Nastys, Parker, Barga, 1994 predictions.
May 1994/Stories include: Flair-Rude, Hart, Luger, Morton, Heenan.

June 1994/Stories include: Steamboat, Snuka, Anthony, Bruises, Blayze.
August 1994/Stories include: Piper, Hogan, 911, Freebirds, rulebreakers.
September 1994/Stories include: Nastys, Undertaker, Flair-Steamboat.
November 1994/Stories include: DiBiase, Sting, Diesel, Cactus-Sabu.
December 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Bret, Rottens, Cactus, AAA midgits.
January 1995/Stories include: Vader, Diesel & Razor, Hart, Luger, Sabu.
February 1995/Stories include: Sting, McMahon-Lawler, Woman, Brutus-Hogan.
March 1995/Stories include: Nastys, Ramon, Tasmaniac, 1995 predictions.
May 1995/Stories include: Michaels, Mabel, Diesel, Undertaker, Hogan.
June 1995/Stories include: Hogan-Savage, Austin, Gangstas, Public Enemy.
August 1995/Stories include: Badd, Bigelow, Studd, Bubba-Sting.
September 1995/Stories include: Vicious, Flair-Hogan, Severn, Mabel.
November 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Wright, Tatanka, Backlund-Clinton.
December 1995/Stories include: Undertaker, Vader, Renegade, Gangstas-PE.
January 1996/Stories include: Norton, Vicious, Psicosis-Misterio.
February 1996/Stories include: 1996 predictions, Goldust, Sherri-Parker.
April 1996/Stories include: Diesel, Kid, Savage-Sting-Luger-Hogan.
May 1996/Stories include: Austin, Public Enemy, Vader, Sasaki, weirdness.

INSIDE WRESTLING

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OFFICIAL RATINGS

TOP 15

1—SHAWN MICHAELS

(6) WWF World champion

2—THE GIANT

(2) No. 2 contender: WCW World title

3—STEVE AUSTIN

(5) No. 4 contender: WWF World title

4—EDDY GUERRERO

(4) U.S. heavyweight champion

5—SID VICIOUS

(1) No. 3 contender: WWF World title

6—BRET HART

(8) No. 2 contender: WWF World title

7—LEX LUGER

(7) No. 3 contender: WCW World title

8—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

(3) WWF Intercontinental champion

9—DEAN MALENKO

(13) WCW cruiserweight champion

10—RAVEN

(12) ECW heavyweight champion

11—JUSHIN LIGER

(11) Holder of eight belts

12—THE UNDERTAKER

(9) No. 6 contender: WWF World title

13—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE

(15) No. 5 contender: WCW World title

14—BIG VAN VADER

(-) No. 8 contender: WWF World title

15—BRIAN CHRISTOPHER

(-) USWA Southern champion

WCW

1—HULK HOGAN

(1) 275, Venice Beach, CA

2—EDDY GUERRERO

(2) 221, El Paso, TX

3—THE GIANT

(3) 430, parts unknown

4—LEX LUGER

(4) 265, Chicago, IL

5—DEAN MALENKO

(11) 216, Tampa, FL

6—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE

(8) 260, Tampa, FL

7—SIX

(5) 212, Minneapolis, MN

8—LORD STEVEN REGAL

(6) 247, Blackpool, England

9—CHRIS BENOIT

(9) 218, Edmonton, Alberta

10—JEFF JARRETT

(7) 230, Nashville, TN

11—ARN ANDERSON

(13) 249, Minneapolis, MN

12—KONNAN

(10) 237, Mexico City, Mexico

13—CHRIS JERICO

(-) 225, Vancouver, British Columbia

14—MARCUS BAGWELL

(-) 240, Marietta, GA

15—SCOTT NORTON

(-) 360, Minneapolis, MN

WWF

1—SHAWN MICHAELS

(5) 234, San Antonio, TX

2—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

(2) 279, Greenwich, CT

3—BRET HART

(6) 235, Calgary, Alberta

4—SID VICIOUS

(1) 318, West Memphis, AR

5—STEVE AUSTIN

(3) 241, Dallas, TX

6—AHMED JOHNSON

(7) 255, Pearl River, MS

7—THE UNDERTAKER

(4) 328, parts unknown

8—FAAROOQ

(8) 260, Perry, GA

9—BIG VAN VADER

(12) 450, Denver, CO

10—GOLDUST

(11) 254, Austin, TX

11—MANKIND

(10) 277, Truth or Consequences, NM

12—ROCKY MAIVIA

(14) 272, Pearl City, HI

13—FLASH FUNK

(13) 222, Denver, CO

14—JAKE ROBERTS

(-) 253, Stone Mountain, GA

15—CRUSH

(15) 322, Kona, HI

MOST POPULAR

1—THE GIANT

Last issue: No. 2 Most Popular

2—AHMED JOHNSON

Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular

3—RODDY PIPER

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4—SHAWN MICHAELS

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6—BRET HART

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7—THE UNDERTAKER

Last issue: No. 6 Most Popular

8—EDDY GUERRERO

Last issue: No. 9 Most Popular

9—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE

Last issue: No. 13 Most Popular

10—THE SANDMAN

Last issue: No. 14 Most Popular

11—GOLDUST

Last issue: No. 10 Most Popular

12—REY MISTERIO JR.

Last issue: No. 12 Most Popular

13—CHRIS JERICO

Last issue: No. 15 Most Popular

14—JAKE ROBERTS

Last issue: unrated

15—MABEL

Last issue: unrated

MOST HATED

1—HULK HOGAN

Last issue: No. 1 Most Hated

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Last issue: No. 2 Most Hated

3—KEVIN NASH

Last issue: No. 4 Most Hated

4—SCOTT HALL

Last issue: No. 3 Most Hated

5—FAAROOQ

Last issue: No. 7 Most Hated

6—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

Last issue: No. 5 Most Hated

7—KEVIN SULLIVAN

Last issue: No. 6 Most Hated

8—SAVIO VEGA

Last issue: unrated

9—SIX

Last issue: No. 8 Most Hated

10—JERRY LAWLER

Last issue: No. 10 Most Hated

11—SID VICIOUS

Last issue: No. 11 Most Hated

12—STEVE MCMICHAEL

Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated

13—RAVEN

Last issue: No. 12 Most Hated

14—BIG VAN VADER

Last issue: No. 12 Most Popular

15—MANKIND

Last issue: No. 13 Most Hated

TOP 15 TAG TEAMS

1—RICK & SCOTT STEINER

(-) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title

2—SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH

(2) WCW World tag team champions

3—OWEN HART & DAVEY BOY SMITH

(1) WWF World tag team champions

4—DOUG FURNAS & PHIL LAFON

(4) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title

5—HARLEM HEAT

(3) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title

6—HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN

(5) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title

7—THE ELIMINATORS

(6) ECW tag team champions

8—THE NASTY BOYS

(10) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title

9—THE BARBARIAN & MENG

(7) No. 4 contenders: WCW World tag title

10—PG-13

(-) USWA tag team champions

11—SABU & ROB VAN DAM

(-) No. 1 contenders: ECW tag title

12—NEW DIESEL & NEW RAZOR RAMON

(9) No. 3 contenders: WWF World tag title

13—THE GANGSTAS

(8) No. 2 contenders: ECW tag title

14—PUBLIC ENEMY

(11) No. 5 contenders: WCW World tag title

15—THE AMAZING FRENCH-CANADIANS

(13) No. 6 contenders: WCW World tag title

These ratings are compiled by the editors with the assistance of promoters, wrestlers, and reporters around the country, and are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and the inherent skill of each wrestler. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue... "Most Popular" and "Most Hated" ratings are based on nationwide surveys of wrestling fans and on mail that comes to our offices ... Championships highlighted in bold on the "Roll Call Of Champions" have changed hands since our previous issue ... The information under the championship listing indicates the date that champion won the title, who the former champion was, and where the match took place.

For period ended January 31, 1997

ROLL CALL OF CHAMPIONS

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL CHAMPION: MITSU HARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN INTERNATIONAL TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
TOSHI AKI KAWADA & AKIRA TAUE
(January 17, 1997; from Johnny Ace & Steve Williams; Matsumoto, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN UNITED NATIONAL CHAMPION: MITSU HARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S ALL-PACIFIC CHAMPION: TAKAKO INOUE
(November 21, 1996; from Reggie Bennett; Kobe, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S CHAMPION: RIE TAMADA
(November 21, 1996; from Kumiko Maekawa; Kobe, Japan)

ALL-JAPAN WOMEN'S TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHIKAYA NAGASHIMA & SUGAR SATO
(September 1, 1996; from Yumi Fukawa & Rie Tamada; Tokyo, Japan)

ECW HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RAVEN
(December 7, 1996; from The Sandman; Philadelphia, PA)

ECW TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE ELIMINATORS
(December 20, 1996; from The Gangstas; Middletown, NY)

ECW TELEVISION CHAMPION: SHANE DOUGLAS
(July 13, 1996; from Chris Jericho; Philadelphia, PA)

IWGP HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(April 29, 1996; from Nobuhiko Takada; Tokyo, Japan)

IWGP TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: TATSUMI FUJINAMI & KENGO KIMURA
(January 4, 1997; from Masa Chono & Hiroyoshi Tenzan; Tokyo, Japan)

IPWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: BIG SLAM
(January 11, 1997; beat Guido Falcone; Pikeville, NC)

MID-EASTERN WRESTLING FEDERATION LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: ADAM FLASH
(December 1, 1996; from Steve Corino; Baltimore, MD)

MID-EASTERN WRESTLING FEDERATION MID-ATLANTIC CHAMPION: JIMMY CICERO
(December 1, 1996; from Boo Bradley; Baltimore, MD)

NWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: DAN SEVERN
(February 24, 1995; from Chris Candido; Erlanger, KY)

NWA NORTH AMERICAN HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: RECKLESS YOUTH
(September 7, 1996; beat Derek Domino; Yardville, NJ)

NWA U.S. TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: THE LOST BOYS
(December 7, 1996; from Downward Spiral; Mount Holly, NJ)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MITSU HARU MISAWA
(January 20, 1997; from Kenta Kobashi; Osaka, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
YOSHINARI OGAWA
(January 15, 1997; from Tsuyoshi Kikuchi; Tokyo, Japan)

PACIFIC WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: TOSHI AKI KAWADA & AKIRA TAUE
(January 17, 1997; from Johnny Ace & Steve Williams; Matsumoto, Japan)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
JULIO SANCHEZ
(January 24, 1997; from Freight Train Jones; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION:
PAT SHAMROCK
(January 11, 1997; from Diablos Macabre; Reading, PA)

PENNSYLVANIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
ACE DARLING & MARK MEST
(December 27, 1996; from Double Delight; Reading, PA)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: ITALIAN STALLION
(December 15, 1996; from George South; Charlotte, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION JUNIOR HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: MADD MAXXINE
(August 24, 1996; beat Black Angel; Forest City, NC)

PRO WRESTLING FEDERATION TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
CRUEL CONNECTION II & FLAMING YOUTH
(January 18, 1997; beat The Overlords; Gastonia, NC)

TRI-STAR WRESTLING HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: THE OUTPATIENT
(June 14, 1996; from Jimmy Sharpe; Rossville, GA)

TRI-STAR WRESTLING TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: CHUCK COLT & RICK JUSTICE
(May 10, 1996; from The New One Man Gang & Joel Travis; Rossville, GA)

USWA HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: JERRY LAWLER
(November 16, 1996; from The Colorado Kid; Memphis, TN)

USWA SOUTHERN CHAMPION: BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
(January 1, 1997; from Wolfie D; Memphis, TN)

USWA TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: PG-13
(January 18, 1997; from Steven Dunn & Flash Flanagan; Memphis, TN)

WCW CRUISERWEIGHT CHAMPION: DEAN MALENKO
(January 22, 1997; from Ultimo Dragon; Milwaukee, WI)

WCW TELEVISION CHAMPION: LORD STEVEN REGAL
(August 20, 1996; from Lex Luger; Dalton, GA)

WCW U.S. CHAMPION: EDDY GUERRERO
(December 29, 1996; beat Dallas Page in tournament final; Nashville, TN)

WCW WORLD CHAMPION: HULK HOGAN
(August 10, 1996; from The Giant; Sturgis, SD)

WCW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: SCOTT HALL & KEVIN NASH
(October 27, 1996; from Harlem Heat; Las Vegas, NV)

WCW WORLD WOMEN'S CHAMPION: AKIRA HOKUTO
(December 29, 1996; beat Madusa in tournament final; Nashville, TN)

WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE HEAVYWEIGHT CHAMPION: THE ICON
(December 7, 1996; from East L.A. Angel; Woodbury, NJ)

WORLD WRESTLING ALLIANCE TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS:
THE HIMALAYAN PLAYERS
(December 7, 1996; won tournament; Woodbury, NJ)

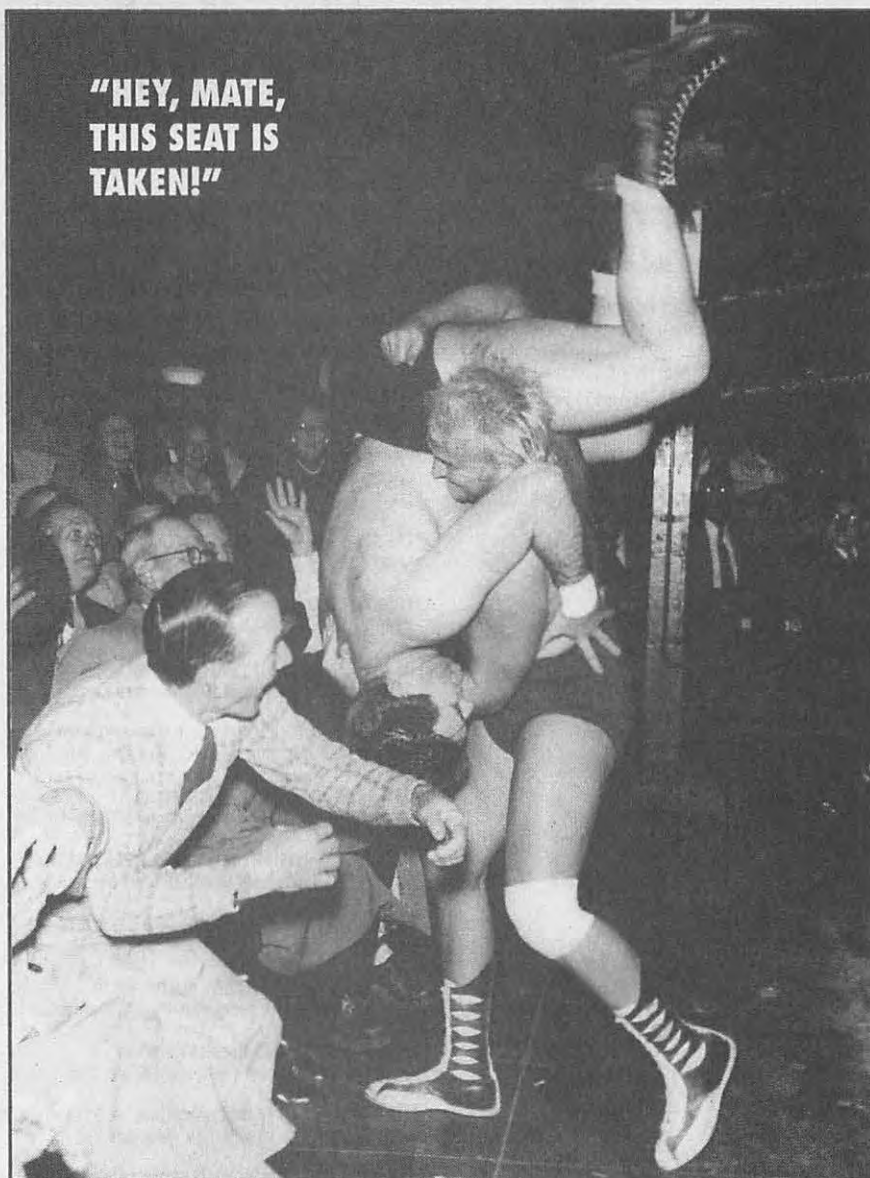
WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPION: HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY
(October 21, 1996; from Marc Mero; Fort Wayne, IN)

WWF WORLD CHAMPION: SHAWN MICHAELS
(January 19, 1997; from "Psycho" Sid Vicious; San Antonio, TX)

WWF WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS: OWEN HART & DAVEY BOY SMITH
(September 22, 1996; from The Smokin' Gunns; Philadelphia, PA)

BLAST FROM THE PAST

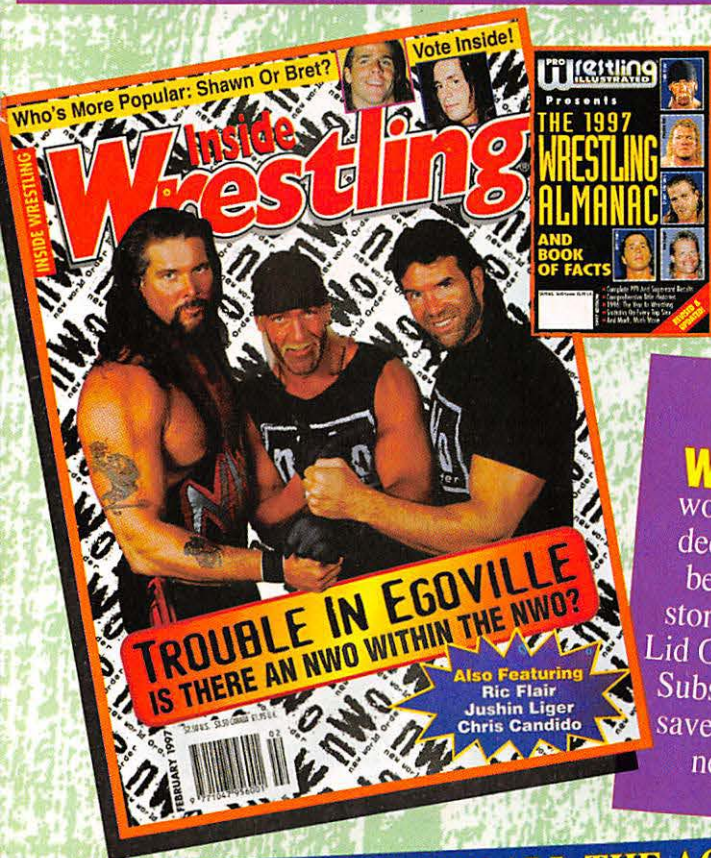
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DR. JERRY GRAHAM vs. DON CURTIS **May 1956**

Wrestling lost a big star of the past when Dr. Jerry Graham died of complications from a stroke in January at age 68. Graham was a four-time U.S. tag team champion (three times with brother Eddie and once with brother Luke). This best-of-three-falls match, in which one fan seemed offended when Graham looked like he was going to slam Don Curtis in his lap, was held in Brisbane, Australia. Graham won it, two falls to one.

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